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THE ESSAYS OF MONTAIGNE

VOLUME II

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THE ESSAYS OF

Montaigne

TRANSLATED BY GEORGE B. IVES

INTRODUCTIONS BY GRACE NORTON

VOLUME II

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CONTENTS

BOOK I (Continued)

L. *Of Democritus and Heraclitus* 3
LI. *Of the vanity of words* 7
LII. *Of the parsimony of the ancients* 12
LIII. *On a saying of Cæsar's* 13
LIV. *Of trivial Minutiæ* 15
LV. *Of Odours* 19
LVI. *Of Prayers* 22
LVII. *Of Age* 34

BOOK II

I. *Of the inconstancy of our actions* 41
II. *Of Drunkenness* 50
III. *A usage of the Island of Cea* 62
IV. *Business to-morrow* 80
V. *Of the Conscience* 83
VI. *Of Experience* 88
VII. *Marks of Honour* 102
VIII. *Of the affection of fathers for their children* 107
IX. *Of the armour of the Parthians* 130
X. *Of Books* 134
XI. *Of Cruelty* 150
XII. *Apology for Raimond Sebond* 170

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ESSAYS OF MONTAIGNE

THE FIRST BOOK

(CONTINUED)

CHAPTER L

OF DEMOCRITUS AND HERACLITUS

The Essay opens with a recognition of the universal usefulness of the judgement, and Montaigne says that in the essays — the tests — he here makes of it (he does not allude to his writings in the modern sense of essays) he avails himself of every opportunity; and he goes on to describe the assistance it gives him; and, still further, his manner of composing, and the advantages of it to a man of not more assured and powerful mind than himself.

But his avoidance of going to the bottom of things does not (he implies) conceal from the reader the manner of man he is; "every motion reveals us"; and in fact, perhaps, the soul is best seen "when she is jogging quietly along."

In its higher planes of existence it is more carried on the winds of passions, and is more engrossed by each separate thing to which it gives itself. This train of thought leads to a passage — "Things by themselves . . ." etc. — where the extreme use of figures (not at all common with Montaigne) makes the clear understanding of the thought somewhat difficult.[1]

Returning from this thought, that it is our opinion of a thing and not the thing itself which affects us (one of the dominant doctrines of the Stoic philosophy), Montaigne recurs to the thought that every chord of our mind may be touched and sounded by commonplace conditions, bringing forward in illustration the game of chess — "that foolish and puerile game," as he thinks it: "I dislike it and shun it because it is not play enough." And he again insists that "every occupation of a man betrays and reveals him equally with any other."

Originally Democritus and Heraclitus came on the stage before now: this long philosophy was inserted in 1595; but it is of little consequence when they appear, as they have but small parts to play. They are introduced only as figure-heads of two different ways of judging of this poor human creature who cannot disguise himself and whose state may be considered either as ridiculous or sorrowful. Montaigne thinks man is fit only to be laughed at, that he is worthy neither of compassion nor of hatred: "It seems to me that we can never be despised as much as we deserve."

It is not often that we find Montaigne in so bitter a mood.

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[1] When I say this style is not frequent with Montaigne, I mean the extreme and confusing use of figurative language. Never was there a writer who made such incessant and illuminating use of figurative expressions of a kind that interpret themselves with the utmost plainness. It is what gives his style its constant beauty of *colour*.

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THE judgement is a tool for all subjects, and enters into every thing. For this reason, in the essays I here make of it, I employ it on every sort of occasion. If a subject is unfamiliar to me, for that very reason I essay it, measuring the depth of the ford from afar; and when I find it too deep for my stature, I remain on the shore; and this recognition of my inability to cross over is a form of its action,[1] aye, one of those of which it is most proud. Sometimes, with a hollow and empty subject, I essay to see if it[2] can find any thing to give it substance and with which to support it and prop it up. Sometimes I direct it to a famous and much-travelled subject about which it can find nothing original, there being such a beaten way that it must needs travel in the track of others. There it plays its game in selecting the road which seems to it the best, and of a thousand paths it says that this one or that one has been the better choice.

(*c*) I take by chance the opening theme, since one is as good as another in my eyes, and I never plan to produce them completely. For I do not see the whole of any thing; nor do those who promise to make us see it. Of a hundred members and aspects that every thing has, I take one, sometimes to taste it, sometimes to skim it,[3] and sometimes to squeeze it even to the bone. I stab into them, not as widely, but as deeply, as I know how. And I like in most cases to seize them by some unfamiliar side. I might venture to go to the bottom of some subject, if I knew myself less well.[4] Scattering a word here, another there, bits taken from their whole, set by themselves, without plan and without pledge, I am not responsible for them, nor bound to hold to them without changing if I so please, nor to refrain from giving myself up to hesitation and uncertainty, and to my dominant characteristic, which is ignorance.

Every motion reveals us. (*a*) That same mind of Cæsar's which manifests itself in organising and arranging the battle of Pharsalia, manifests itself also in arranging idle and amo-

[1] That is, of the action of the judgement.
[2] The judgement.
[3] *A effleurer.*
[4] The edition of 1595 adds: *et me trompois en mon impuissance.*

rous matters. We judge a horse, not merely by seeing him when racing, but also by seeing him walk, aye, and by seeing him at rest in the stable.

(*c*) Among the offices of the soul there are some that are inferior. He who does not see her in that wise does not know her wholly; and perchance we observe her best when she is jogging quietly along. The gusts of passion affect her more on her higher planes; moreover, she gives herself wholly to every matter and wholly busies herself in it; and she never treats more than one subject at a time, and treats it, not in accordance with its qualities, but in accordance with her own. Things by themselves have, it may be, their weights and measures and conditions; but within us, she fashions them as she thinks best. Death is terrifying to Cicero, desirable to Cato, indifferent to Socrates. Health, conscience, authority, learning, wealth, beauty, and their opposites, are stripped on entering, and receive from the soul new apparel and such colouring as pleases her — dark, light, dim, glaring, soft, deep, superficial — and as pleases each of our souls; for they have not agreed in common upon the titles, laws, and nature of their qualities; each soul is queen in her own domain.[1]

Wherefore let us no more find excuse in the external qualities of things; it is for us to estimate their value to ourselves. What is well and bad for us depends wholly on ourselves. Let us offer our gifts and our prayers to ourselves, not to Fortune: she can not affect our moral nature; on the contrary, that draws her in its train and moulds her to its likeness. Why shall I not judge of Alexander at table, talking and drinking heavily? or, when he played chess, what chord of the mind does not that foolish and puerile game touch and employ? I dislike it and shun it, because it is not play enough, and it is too serious a pastime; I feel ashamed to give to it the attention which would suffice for some

[1] This whole passage is so perplexing that it is given at length, that readers may interpret it for themselves. *La santé, la conscience, l'autorité, la science, la richesse, la beauté, et leurs contraires se despouillent à l'entrée, et recoivent de l'ame nouvelle vesture, et de la teinture qu'il luy plait: brune, verte, claire, obscure, aigre, douce, profonde, superficielle, et qu'il plait à chacune d'elles; car elles n'ont pas verifié en commun leurs stile, regles, et formes; chacune est reine en son estat.*

worthy thing. He was no more completely engrossed in preparing for his glorious expedition to the Indies; nor is another man in solving the difficulties of a passage on which the salvation of the human race depends. See how heavy and compressed that absurd amusement makes our mind, if all her sinews do not stiffen themselves; how amply it permits every one to know himself and to judge himself rightly. I do not behold myself and feel myself more completely in any other situation.[1] What passion does not therein play upon us? anger, vexation, hatred, impatience, and a vehement ambition to conquer in a matter in which it would be more excusable to be ambitious of being conquered; for rare excellence, above the common, in frivolous things is unbecoming for a man of high standing. What I say regarding this example may be said of all others. Every particle, every occupation of a man betrays and displays him equally with every other.

(*a*) Democritus and Heraclitus were two philosophers, the former of whom, deeming the human state vain and ridiculous, never appeared in public but with a mocking and laughing countenance; Heraclitus, having pity and sympathy for that same state of ours, wore an unchangeably sad visage, and his eyes were full of tears.

(*b*) Alter
Ridebat, quoties a limine moverat unum
Protuleratque pedem; flebat contrarius alter.[2]

(*a*) I like best the first humour, not because it is more agreeable to laugh than to weep, but because it is more contemptuous and condemns us more than the other; and it seems to me that we can never be despised as much as we deserve. Lamentation and commiseration are commingled with some estimation of that which we lament; the things we laugh at we esteem valueless. I do not think that we have so much ill fortune as inconstancy, or so much bad purpose as folly; we are not so full of evil as we are of inanity; we are not so

[1] Than in playing chess. *Je ne me vois et retaste plus universellement en nulle autre posture.*

[2] The one laughed every time he stepped over the threshold; the other, on the contrary, wept. — Juvenal, *Satires*, X, 28.

wretched as we are base. Thus Diogenes, who in idle solitude passed his time rolling himself about in his tub, and flouting the great Alexander,[1] esteeming us as but flies or bladders full of wind, was a judge much more bitter and sharp-tongued, and consequently, to my feeling, more just, than Timon — he who was called the hater of men; for what we hate we take seriously. This man wished us ill, was passionately desirous of our destruction, shunned intercourse with us as dangerous, we being wicked and depraved; the other thought so little of us that we could neither disturb him nor by our contagion harm him; he forsook our company, not from fear, but from contempt for our society; he thought us capable of doing neither well nor ill.

Of the same stamp was the reply of Statilius, when Brutus spoke to him to secure his aid in the conspiracy against Cæsar; he thought the enterprise a just one, but did not think that men deserved that any trouble should be taken for them.[2] (*c*) This conforms to the rule of Hegesias, who said: "The wise man should do nothing except for himself, inasmuch as he alone deserves to have things done for him";[3] and that of Theodorus: "It is unreasonable that the wise man should risk his life for the good of his country, and that he should imperil wisdom for fools."[4] Our peculiar condition is as ridiculous as risible.

CHAPTER LI

OF THE VANITY OF WORDS

It is easy to understand that Montaigne would have no respect for "the art of rhetoric"; for the tongue that could "make the worse appear the better reason"; for the eloquence "that makes it its business to deceive . . . our judgement and to debase and corrupt the essence of things." He says that Socrates and Plato defined it as the "art of deceiving and flattering." But he might have remembered that Diogenes Laertius (whom he quotes so often) said that Socrates himself (forerunning Mil-

[1] See Plutarch, *Life of Alexander;* Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, V, 32.
[2] See Plutarch, *Life of Brutus.*
[3] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Aristippus.*
[4] See *Ibid.*

ton's Satan) was ridiculed by Aristophanes "as making the worse appear the better reason." Montaigne thinks that eloquence flourishes less in a monarchical government than under other forms of administration, for one well-educated man (as a prince may be supposed to be) is less under the influence of its poison than the ignorant commonalty. There was never any orator of renown known to come from Macedonia or Persia.

All this philosophy about "la vanité des paroles" was suggested to Montaigne, he says, by a talk he had just been having with an Italian he had taken into his service, the former maître d'hôtel of a cardinal, whose elaborate discourse about his office and "the science of the gullet" seemed highly ridiculous to Montaigne. And not less so seemed to him the big words of architects (or mere house-builders), pilasters, architraves, Corinthian and Doric style, and the like, when they were only busy about a kitchen door. And all the strange names used by grammarians — metonomy and metaphor — are rather absurd when they concern the chatter of a chambermaid.

But of far more importance than these trivial *piperies* is the custom of calling State officers by titles too big for their duties and powers; and worse still the unworthy bestowal of such a surname as "Divine" on such a man as Aretino — "which in my opinion will be matter of reproach some day to our age."

A RHETORICIAN of past times said that his trade was to make small things appear great and be thought so. (*b*) He is a cobbler who makes a big shoe for a little foot.[1] (*a*) In Sparta they would have whipped him for professing a cheating and lying art. (*b*) And I think that Archidamus, who was king there, did not hear without surprise the reply of Thucydides, of whom he inquired which was the more able in wrestling, Pericles or he. "That," he said, "would be difficult to say positively; for, when I throw him in wrestling, he persuades those who saw it that he was not thrown, and he wins." [2] (*a*) Those who mask and paint women do less harm; for it is a small loss not to see them in their natural state; whereas these [3] make it their business to deceive, not our eyes, but our judgement, and to debase and corrupt the very essence of things.

Those commonwealths which maintained themselves in an orderly and well-governed condition — like the Cretan

[1] See Plutarch, *Apothegms of the Lacedæmonians*, under "Agesilaus."
[2] See Plutarch, *Life of Pericles*.
[3] The rhetoricians.

or the Lacedæmonian—made no great account of orators. (*c*) Ariston sagely defines rhetoric: "The science of persuading the people";[1] Socrates, Plato: "The art of deceiving and flattering";[2] and they who deny this as a general description verify it everywhere in their precepts. The Mohammedans forbid their children to be taught it because of its uselessness;[3] and the Athenians, perceiving how pernicious was its use, which had great vogue in their city, decreed that its principal element, which is to stir the emotions, should be laid aside, together with exordiums and perorations.[4] (*a*) It is an instrument invented to manage and excite a mob and a disorderly commonalty, and is an instrument that is employed only in diseased states, like medicine; in those where the common people, where the ignorant, where all had universal power,[5] like those of Athens, Rhodes, and Rome, and where things were in a continual turmoil—there orators swarmed. And, indeed, there were few persons in those commonwealths who attained to great influence without the help of eloquence: Pompey, Cæsar, Crassus, Lucullus, Lentulus, Metellus found in it their main support in rising to that height of authority at which they finally arrived, and were more effectively assisted by it than by arms; (*c*) contrary to the opinion of more enlightened times. For L. Volumnius, speaking in public in favour of the election to the consulship of Q. Fabius and P. Decius, said: "They are men born for war; great in deeds; unpractised in the strife of words; minds truly consular; the subtle and eloquent and learned are good for the city, as prætors to administer justice."[6]

(*a*) Eloquence was most flourishing (*c*) at Rome (*a*) when affairs were in the worst state, and the storm of civil war agitated them, as an open and uncultivated field bears the lustiest weeds. By which it would seem that the governments that are subject to a monarch have less need of it

[1] See Quintilian, II, 15.
[2] See *Ibid.*, II, 16; Plato, *Gorgias*, *passim.*
[3] See G. Postel, *Histoire des Turcs.*
[4] See Quintilian, II, 16.
[5] *Où tous ont tout peu* [*pu*].
[6] See Livy, X, 22.

than the others; for the stupidity and credulity which are found in the common people and which make them liable to be managed and led by the ears at the sweet sound of this harmony, without seeking to weigh and discover the truth about things by the power of reason — this credulity, I say, is not found so easily in a single person; and it is more easy to defend him by good instruction and good advice from the effect of that poison. There was never known to come from Macedonia or Persia any orator of renown.

I have quoted this saying [1] in connection with an Italian with whom I have just been talking, who was in the service of the late Cardinal Caraffa, as his steward, until his death. I made him tell me about his office. He discoursed to me on this science of the gullet with a magisterial gravity and demeanour, as if he were speaking to me of some great point in theology. He expounded to me a distinction in appetites: that which exists before eating, that after the second and third courses; how sometimes simply to gratify it, sometimes to arouse and stimulate it; the care of his sauces, first in general, and then going into particulars as to the qualities of the ingredients and their effects; the differences in salads according to their seasons — what ones should be heated, what ones require to be served cold; the way to decorate and embellish them to make them attractive even to the eyes. After that, he entered upon the order of courses, full of fine and important considerations.

(*b*) Nec minimo sane discrimine refert
Quo gestu lepores, et quo gallina secetur.[2]

(*a*) And all this inflated with rich and magnificent words and even such as are used in discoursing about the government of an empire. There came to my mind what this man says:

Hoc salsum est, hoc adustum est, hoc lautum est parum,
Illud recte; iterum sic memento; sedulo

[1] That with which the Essay opens.

[2] He announces that it is certainly not a thing that makes little difference, in what manner a hare or a hen is carved. — Juvenal, *Satires*, V, 123.

Moneo quæ possum pro mea sapientia.
Postremo, tanquam in speculum, in patinas, Demea,
Inspicere jubeo, et moneo quid facto usus sit.[1]

Yet the Greeks themselves highly praised the order and arrangement that Paulus Æmilius observed in the feast that he gave them on his return from Macedonia.[2] But I am not talking here of facts, I am talking of words. I know not whether it is with others as it is with me, but when I hear our architects puff themselves out with those big words, pilasters, architraves, cornices, Corinthian and Doric work, and other like ones of their jargon, I can not prevent my imagination from being possessed instantly by the palace of Apolidon;[3] and, in reality, I find that they are but the paltry parts of my kitchen door. (*b*) When we hear the words metonomy, metaphor, allegory, and other such terms of grammar, does it not seem that they betoken some rare and foreign[4] form of language? They are names that describe the chatter of your chambermaid. (*a*) It is a deception akin to this to call the dignitaries of our kingdom by the proud titles of the Romans, since they have no resemblance in function, and also less authority and power. And this, too, which, in my opinion, will be matter of reproach some day to our age— the employing unworthily, for whomsoever we please, the most glorious titles wherewith antiquity honoured one or two personages in several ages. Plato carried away the surname Divine by a consent so universal that no one bore him a grudge; and the Italians, who pride themselves, and justly, upon having commonly more alert wits and saner judgement than the other nations of their time, have lately endowed with that title Aretino, in whom, save for a bombastic style, padded with witticisms, ingenious, in truth, but far-fetched and fanciful, and besides his eloquence, such as it is, I do not see that there is any thing

[1] This is too salt, this is burned, this has not enough flavour; this one is very good; remember another time to have it the same. I carefully teach them what I can out of my wisdom. Finally, Demea, I bid them look into the dishes as into a looking-glass, and I advise them what it is profitable to do. — Terence, *Adelphi*, III, 3.71.

[2] See Plutarch, *Life of Paulus Æmilius*.

[3] In *Amadis de Gaule*.

[4] *Pellegrin = pelerin*.

superior to the common authors of his age; so far is he from approaching that ancient divinity. And the surname Great we fasten upon princes who have nothing in them above the ordinary.

CHAPTER LII

OF THE PARSIMONY OF THE ANCIENTS

THIS is merely a record of the parsimony — or carefulness about expenses — of Regulus and of Cato, of Scipio, Homer, Zeno, and Tiberius Gracchus.

ATTILIUS REGULUS, commander of the Roman army in Africa, in the midst of his glory and of his victories over the Carthaginians, wrote to the Republic that a farmer [1] whom he had left alone in the management of his estate, which in all was seven acres of land, had run away, having stolen his implements of husbandry; and he asked leave of absence that he might return home and arrange about this, for fear that his wife and children would suffer from it. The Senate arranged to commit to another the care of his property, and had him supplied anew with what had been stolen from him, and decreed that his wife and children should be supported at the public expense.[2] The elder Cato, when returning from Spain as consul, sold his war-horse to save the money that it would have cost to take him back to Italy by sea; and, when governor of Sardinia, did all his overseeing on foot, having with him no other than an official of the Republic, who carried for him his robe, and an urn in which to offer sacrifices; and oftenest he carried his pack himself. He boasted of never having had a robe that had cost more than ten crowns, and of never having sent to market more than ten sous for a day's provisions; and that, as to his country houses, there was not one that was rough-cast and plastered outside.[3] Scipio Æmilianus, after two triumphs and two consulships, went on an embassy with a train of only seven slaves.[4] It is believed

[1] *Valet de labourage.*
[2] See Valerius Maximus, IV, 4.6.
[3] See Plutarch, *Life of Cato the Censor.*
[4] See Valerius Maximus, IV, 3.13.

that Homer had never more than one; Plato three; Zeno, head of the Stoic sect, not one.[1] (*b*) But five and a half sous a day were allowed Tiberius Gracchus when he went on a mission for the Republic, although he was then the first man among the Romans.[2]

CHAPTER LIII

ON A SAYING OF CÆSAR'S

This *mot de César*, from the "De Bello Civili," is the last sentence of the Essay, and was translated by Montaigne himself (in the early editions): "It happens by a common natural weakness that we both trust more, and fear more, things that we have not seen and that are hidden and unknown." The thoughts with which Montaigne leads up to this do not concern themselves so much with the subject of the saying, as with the point that man's imperfection is demonstrated by the inconstancy of his desires. Even the philosophers have never been able to discover the sovereign good of man.

IF we occupied ourselves now and then in considering ourselves, and employed the time that we spend in criticising others, and in learning about things with which we have no concern, in sounding our own depths, we should easily perceive that all this our structure is framed of weak and defective parts. Is it not a strange proof of imperfection, to be unable to have settled pleasure in any thing, and that even by desire and imagination it is beyond our power to decide what is needed for us? To this, strong testimony is borne by the great discussion which there has always been among philosophers, to discover the sovereign good of mankind, and which still goes on and will go on forever, without decision and without agreement.

(*b*) Dum abest quod avemus, id exsuperare videtur
Cætera; post aliud, cum contigit illud, avemus
Et sitis æqua tenet.[3]

[1] See Seneca, *Consolatio ad Albinam*, XII.

[2] See Plutarch, *Life of Tiberius Gracchus*.

[3] Whilst what we crave is wanting, it seems to transcend all other things; later, when that has been attained, we crave some thing else, and an equal thirst possesses us. — Lucretius, III, 1082.

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(*a*) Whatever may fall within our knowledge and our enjoyment, we feel that it does not satisfy us, and we go gaping after things to come, and unknown, because those of the present do not suffice us; not, to my thinking, that they have not the wherewithal to suffice us, but that we hold them with a sickly and senseless grasp.

(*b*) Nam, cum vidit hic, ad usum quæ flagitat usus,
Omnia jam ferme mortalibus esse parata,
Divitiis homines et honore et laude potentis
Affluere atque bona natorum excellere fama,
Nec minus esse domi cuiquam tamen anxia corda,
Atque animum infestis cogi servire querelis:
Intellexit ibi vitium vas efficere ipsum,
Omniaque illius vitio corrumpier intus,
Quæ collata foris et commoda quæque venirent.[1]

(*a*) Our appetite is hesitating and uncertain; it can neither hold to any thing nor enjoy any thing in a worthy way. Man, thinking it to be the fault of these things, supplies himself with, and feeds upon, other things which he knows not, and which he understands not; on which he fixes his desires and his hopes, and holds them in honour and veneration; as Cæsar says: *Communi fit vitio naturæ et invisis, latitantibus atque incognitis rebus magis confidamus, vehementiusque exterreamur.*[2]

[1] For when he [Epicurus] saw that all the things needed for the support of life we already have; more powerful by honour and reputation, overflowing with riches, and uplifted by the good name of their children; and yet the heart of every man was not the less inwardly uneasy, and life tormented by the discontent of the spirit; he perceived the cause of the violence of these threatening lamentations to lie here: it is in the vessel itself [the soul], and all the things, whatever they may be, brought to it from without, however agreeable, are corrupted by fault of this vessel. — Lucretius, VI, 9, 10, 12–14, 16–19. This text differs slightly from the modern text, as does also that of Lambin (Paris, 1563), the edition Montaigne used.

[2] It happens by a common natural weakness that we both trust more, and fear more violently, things that we have not seen, and that are hidden and unknown. — Cæsar, *De Bello Civili*, II, 4. In all the editions from 1580 to 1588, the essay closed with the following translation of the passage quoted: *Il se fait, par un vice ordinaire de nature, que nous ayons et plus de fiance et plus de crainte des choses que nous n'avons pas veu, et qui sont cachées et inconnues.*

CHAPTER LIV

OF TRIVIAL MINUTIÆ

After all the dry little morsels — *leçons* (in the old sense of the word) rather than "essays" — we have been munching, we come to a bit with more flavour, a more juicy slice. The pleasantness of this Essay is in the personal touch, — in seeing Montaigne playing games with his family, — in that, and in one other passage that I shall speak of directly. I am inclined to believe that the title of the Essay and its first page were merely intended to give, — in a certain inverted, reverted fashion, — by the contempt thrown on trifles, a certain dignity or decorum to the trivial amusement "we" had just been indulging in *chez moy*. The game was, who could think of the greatest number of things, called by the same name, that were unlike each other and at the two extremes. The enumeration that Montaigne gives best explains itself.

He passes on, evidently, from what they could have said in a game, to what the game had made him think of, and he goes deeper and deeper in thoughts that became later a "Pensée" of Pascal. But what is of most interest is the passage where, after praising the "simple peasants" as few men of his age would have thought of doing, but as he does over and over again, he goes on to praise "the poetry of the people." It was the first time that the phrase had been heard; and his appreciation of this form of poetry is a delightful expression of the freedom and delicacy of his own poetic perceptions.

The concluding paragraph has a charming, half-humorous, wholly individual personal note.

THERE are certain frivolous and trivial minutiæ, by means of which men sometimes seek commendation; like those poets who make whole works of lines beginning with one and the same letter. We see eggs, bowls, wings, axes, designed in old times by the Greeks, with the measure of their lines, by lengthening them or shortening them in such wise that they came to represent this or that figure. Such was the art of the man who occupied himself in calculating in how many ways the letters of the alphabet could be arranged, and found the incredible number mentioned by Plutarch.[1] I agree with the opinion of him to whom a man was brought

[1] See Plutarch, *Table Gossip:* "Xenocrates says that the number of *syllables* made by the letters combined and mingled together amounts to one hundred million, two hundred thousand."

able to throw with his hand a grain of millet with such skill that he never failed to pass it through the eye of a needle; and from whom was asked some present to reward such rare ability; whereupon he jestingly, and justly in my opinion, ordered given to this artist two or three bushels of millet, so that such a fine accomplishment should not remain unexercised.[1] It is marvellous evidence of the weakness of our judgement that it commends things by reason of their rarity or novelty, or even of their difficulty, if worth and usefulness be not combined therewith.

We have just been playing in my family the game of seeing who could point out the most things of which the two extremes are opposed; as "Sire" is a title which is given to the highest personage of our State, who is the king, and is given also to the common people, as to tradesmen, and is never applied to those between the two. Women of quality we call "Dames," those of the middle class "Damoiselles," and "Dames" again, those of the lowest order. (*b*) The canopies that are placed over tables are permitted only in the houses of princes and in taverns. (*a*) Democritus said that the gods and the beasts had more acute senses than men, who are on a plane between.[2] The Romans wore the same attire on days of mourning and on festal days. It is certain that extreme fear and extreme eagerness of valour [3] equally disturb the bowels and relax them. (*c*) The nickname of "Trembler," which was given to Sancho, the twelfth King of Navarre,[4] shows that bravery as well as fear causes our limbs to tremble. And when his people, who were arming him, seeing his skin quiver, tried to reassure him by belittling the danger into which he was about to plunge, he said: "You know me ill; if my flesh were aware how far my courage will soon carry it, it would be thoroughly chilled." [5] (*a*) La foiblesse qui nous vient de froi-

[1] See Quintilian, II, 20.

[2] See Plutarch, *The Opinions of Philosophers.*

[3] *Ardeur de courage.*

[4] "Montaigne certainly alludes to Garcia V, called 'Le Trembleur,' the twelfth King of Navarre, son of Sancho Garcia. He reigned near the close of the tenth century." — M. Villey.

[5] *Elle s'en transiroit tout à plat.*

deur et desgoutement aux exercises de Venus, elle nous vient aussi d'un appetit trop vehement et d'une chaleur desreglée. Extreme cold and extreme heat boil and bake. Aristotle says that masses of lead melt and liquefy with cold and the severe temperature of winter as well as with fierce heat.[1] (*c*) Desire and satiety fill with distress the regions above and below pleasure. (*a*) Stupidity and wisdom in the endurance of human conditions meet at the same point of discernment and steadiness.[2] The wise curb and command evil, and the others do not recognise it; the latter are, so to speak, on this side of conditions; the former beyond them, who,[3] having well weighed and considered the circumstances, and having measured them and judged them for what they are, fling themselves on them, with lusty courage; they scorn them and trample upon them, having a strong and stout soul, against which the shafts of fortune striking must of necessity rebound, blunted, meeting a body on which they can make no impression. The ordinary, average disposition of man is found between these two extremes: it is that of those who perceive evils, discern them, and can not endure them. Infancy and decrepitude are alike in feebleness of brain; avarice and lavishness, in a similar desire to attract and to obtain.

(*b*) It may be said with reason that (*c*) there is an abecedarian ignorance that goes before learning; another, belonging to teachers,[4] that comes after learning; an ignorance which learning makes and engenders, just as she unmakes and destroys the first. (*b*) Of simple souls, less heedful and less instructed, there are made good Christians, who, from reverence and obedience, simply believe and keep themselves within the laws. In minds of medium strength and medium capacity mistaken opinions are engendered; they follow the suggestion of the first impression and have some right to interpret it as shallowness and stupidity that we have stayed in the old ways, those of us who are not therein

[1] See Aristotle, *De Auscultationibus Mirabilibus*. Montaigne interprets the text inaccurately.

[2] *La bestise et la sagesse se rencontrent en mesme point de sentiment et de resolution à la souffrance des accidens humains.*

[3] The wise.

[4] *Doctorale.*

instructed by study. Great minds, being more stable and clear-sighted, make another sort of true believers; who, by long and devout investigation, discern a deeper and more hidden light in the Scripture, and perceive the mysterious and divine secret of our ecclesiastical polity. But we see that some of these have arrived at this last stage by way of the second, with marvellous profit and strengthening, as the extreme limit of Christian understanding, and that they enjoy their victory with solace, thanksgiving, reformation of morals, and great modesty. And in this category I do not propose to place those others who, to clear themselves from the distrust due to their past error, and to give us confidence in them, become extreme, indiscreet, and unreasonable in the handling of our cause, and mar it with endless reproaches of violence.

(*c*) The simple peasants are worthy people, and worthy people the philosophers, or, as our age calls them, naturally strong and clear in mind, enriched by wide education in useful knowledge. The mongrels (of whom I am one, and so many others) who are above the first condition, of ignorance of letters, and have not been able to reach the other, sitting between two stools, are dangerous, useless, troublesome; these disturb the world. Therefore, for my part, I draw back as far as I can to the first and natural condition, whence I have to no avail tried to depart. Popular and purely natural poetry has simplicities and graces by which it rivals the main beauty of poetry excellent in art;[1] as may be seen in the *villanelles* of Gascony and in the songs that are brought to us from nations that have no knowledge of learning, or even of writing. Mediocre poetry, which halts between the two, is despised, without honour and without value.

(*a*) But since, after the way was opened to the mind, I found, as commonly happens, that we had regarded as a difficult exercise, and concerning a rare subject, one that is not at all so; and that, after our searching power has been aroused, it discovers an infinite number of similar examples, I will add only this one: that, if these essays were worthy to be pronounced upon, it might well happen, in my opinion,

[1] *Parfaicte selon l'art.*

that they would scarcely please common and ignorant minds or rare and learned ones; [1] the former would not understand them well enough, the latter would understand them too well; they might make shift to live in the middle region.

CHAPTER LV

OF ODOURS

The title does not seem to promise much of interest, but interest is awakened by one of the first sentences; for it has the personal expression that is the charm of the Essays. "The most exquisite odour for a woman is to have no odour," Montaigne remarked in 1580, when all the poets around him were singing in rapturous phrases the odorous breath of woman. Listen to Ronsard describing "les beautés qu'il voudrait en s'amie."

La dens d'ivoire, odorante l'haleine
A qui s'egalerait à peine
Les doux parfums de la Sabée
Ou toute l'odeur dérobée
Que l'Arabie heureusement amène.

This was the fashion of the day. Montaigne, with the ancients, was of another mind. The remark that follows has the same flavour of old-time opinions; and it is worth observing that Montaigne suppressed it in his later editions; but there are yet some hearts that welcome it.

This Essay in the first edition consisted only of this one paragraph. It ended with

Posthume, non bene olet, qui bene semper olet

(a line of Martial); but in the next important edition (1588) Montaigne added another page or two, of which one paragraph is interesting from its theory of the use of incense, and another from its account of the luxurious possibilities and practices of the day, and another — the last — for its personality.

IT is said of some persons, for example, of Alexander the Great, that their sweat gave forth a sweet odour, by virtue of some rare and extraordinary constitution of the body; of which Plutarch [2] and others seek the cause. But the usual bodily habit is different;

[1] *Esprits communs et vulgaires, ny guiere aux singuliers et excellens.* In 1580 the last clause reads *esprits grossiers et ignorans, ny guiere aux delicats et savans.* And this sentence is added: *Ils trouveroint place entre ces deux extremités.*

[2] See Plutarch, *Life of Alexander.*

(*c*) and the best possible condition is to be odourless. (*a*) The sweetness of the purest breath can have no greater excellence than to be without any odour that offends us, as are the breaths of very healthy children. That, says Plautus, is why

Mulier tum bene olet, ubi nihil olet: [1]

the most exquisite odour for a woman is to have no odour; (*b*) as we say that the best odour of her acts is when they are impalpable and noiseless.[2] (*a*) And we are justified in regarding the pleasant external odours as laying open to suspicion those who use them, and in thinking that they may be employed to conceal some natural defect in that direction. Whence are derived the quips of the ancient poets: "To smell sweet is to stink."

Rides nos, Coracine, nil olentes;
Malo quam bene olere, nil olere.[3]

And elsewhere, —

Posthume, non bene olet, qui bene semper olet.[4]

(*b*) I like very much, none the less, to be surrounded [5] with pleasant odours, and I hate beyond measure bad smells, which I perceive at a greater distance than any one else.

Namque sagacius unus odoror,
Polypus, an gravis hirsutis cubet hircus in alis,
Quam canis acer ubi lateat sus.[6]

(*c*) The most simple and natural odours seem to me the most agreeable; and this matter chiefly concerns the ladies. In the densest barbarism, the Scythian women, after bath-

[1] A woman then smells most agreeably when she does not smell at all. — Plautus, *Mostellaria*, I, 3.117. Montaigne translates after quoting.

[2] The last clause was omitted in 1595.

[3] You laugh at me, Coracinus, for not being scented; I prefer not to smell at all rather than to smell sweet. — Martial, VI, 55.4.

[4] Posthumus, he does not smell agreeably, who always smells agreeably. — Martial, II, 12.4. The essay ended here in 1580.

[5] *A estre entretenu.*

[6] For my nose detects more acutely a cancer or a rank arm-pit than does a keen hound where lurks the boar. — Horace, *Epodes*, XII, 4.

ing, powder and anoint the whole body and the face with a certain odoriferous plant which grows in their country, and having removed that fard, preparatory to rejoining their mates, their skin is softened and perfumed by it.[1] (*b*) Whatever the odour may be, it is wonderful how it clings to me, and how adapted my skin is to absorb it. He who complains of Nature because she has left man with no instrument to carry odours to his nose is in error: for they carry themselves. But particularly in my case, my moustaches, which are thick, do that for me: if I put my glove or my handkerchief to them, the smell will last a whole day; they reveal the place I have come from. The warm kisses of youth, sweet and greedy and cloying, used in old times to cling to them, and remain for several hours. And yet I find myself but little subject to the common diseases which are taken by communication, and which arise from the contagion of the air; and I have escaped those of my time, of which there have been several varieties in our towns and in our armies. (*c*) We read of Socrates that, although he never left Athens during several returns of the plague which so many times cruelly afflicted her, he alone was never the worse for it.[2]

(*b*) The doctors might, so I think, derive more profit from odours than they do; for I have often noticed that they affect me and act on my spirits according to their nature; which makes me think well of what is said, that the use of incense and perfumes in churches, so ancient and so widespread among all nations and religions, is to delight us and to arouse and purify our senses, the better to fit us for profound meditation.

(*c*) I should well like, in order to judge of it, to have had personal knowledge of the art [3] of those cooks who knew how to unite foreign odours with the flavour of the meats, as was observed particularly in the service of that king of Tunis who, in our day, came to Naples to speak face to face with the Emperor Charles. His meats were stuffed with odoriferous ingredients so expensively that one peacock and two pheasants cost a hundred ducats to prepare in their way;

[1] See Herodotus, IV, 75.
[2] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Socrates*.
[3] *Avoir eu ma part de l'art.*

and when they were carved, not only the banquet hall, but all the rooms in the palace and even in the neighbouring houses were filled with a very sweet vapour which did not immediately pass away.[1]

(*b*) My chief care in selecting my lodging is to avoid ill-smelling and heavy air. Those beautiful cities Venice and Paris impair the good opinion I have of them by the offensive smell, in the one, of her marshes, in the other, of her mud.

CHAPTER LVI

OF PRAYERS

This Essay originally (in 1580) began with the sentence, "I know not whether I am mistaken." In 1582 the first lines were added, with the exception of the sentence concerning "l'Eglise catholique, apostolique et romaine," which was added in 1595. M. Villey observes: "This declaration, which appeared for the first time in the edition of 1582, was unquestionably induced by the warning given Montaigne by the *maestro del sacre palazzo*, of which Montaigne speaks in his *Journal de Voyage*." He there says (18th March, 1580): "To-day in the evening, my Essays were returned to me corrected in accordance with the judgement of the Docteurs Moines. The Maestro del sacre palazzo had been able to judge of them only by the report of some French Frater, he [*i. e.*, the Maestro] not at all understanding our language; he was entirely satisfied by the explanations I gave of each article that had been censured."

This is one of the Essays that Montaigne most added to, particularly in the editions during his own life. Long passages were added everywhere; an especially long one, from "Nor surely is it right to see the holy book . . . tossed about," to "would force me, perhaps, to be silent" (pages 27–31); which again was increased by a long addition in 1595. In 1580 the Essay was about a third only of its present length: in 1588 nearly two thirds.

It is an Essay not remarkable in thought or expression, but of great personal interest as showing (to my mind) the entire simplicity and sincerity of Montaigne's feeling about matters of religion. He writes as a respectful and obedient son of the Church, on a matter which lies not outside, but, one may say, *beneath*, the prescriptions of the Church,— a matter intimately concerning every human soul,— the meaning and use of Prayer. He first expresses the strength of his sentiment about the

[1] See Paulus Jovius, *History of his Time*. The king was Muley Hassan.

Lord's Prayer, and then his conviction that we should not invoke God's aid "without considering whether the occasion be reasonable or unreasonable." Our prayer must arise from a pure heart; "otherwise we ourselves present to him the rods wherewith to chastise us." To pray *par usage*, to pray without praying, to give "to the vices their hour, to God his hour" — what an unnatural conscience that can thus find peace![1] And what must we think of the prayers of those who persist in vicious habits? "Are they so bold as to ask forgiveness . . . without repentance?"

His thought turns to the discussions he had had perhaps with his Protestant brother. Montaigne's brother undoubtedly thought that in him (Montaigne) there was evident "some brightness of mind," and perhaps accused him of hypocrisy. The last sentence of this paragraph is very interesting as an expression of his nature. Then, still somewhat thinking of the Protestants, perhaps, he speaks of the reasonableness of the Church's prohibition of the indiscriminate use of the Psalms (it is to be remembered that they had been set to gay music at Court); and enlarging on this subject, he declares that to the reading of the Bible, "we should always add this exordium of our divine service, *Sursum corda*." And he expresses his sense of the dangers arising from too many translations. "Are we sure," he asks, "that in the Basque country and in Brittany there are enough judges to confirm the translation made into their language? The universal Church has no decision to make more difficult or more important."

The passage that follows, "One of our Greek historians" to the quotation from Epicurus, was added in 1595 and is uninteresting, since it is only a rather misplaced and obscure setting forth (by means of historical examples) of the point he is *about* to make — that religion should not be *talked* about, and *discussed*, and made *common*. This he maintains more openly and clearly on the next page; and in connection with this he expresses his sympathy with the Protestant feeling about the name of God.

He then passes back (curiously enough, by the way of Xenophon) to the worse than absurdity of praying to God when our hearts are full of sinful thoughts; and gives a little scoff at women in general, apropos of Queen Margaret of Navarre (whom he quite misrepresents).

The Essay closes with a paragraph eloquent from its earnestness, and which (excepting the reference to Plato and the quotation from Horace) belonged to the first draft.

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[1] "He who confessing himself" (page 26) was probably Arnaud de Ferrier, who was compromised in 1559 as "fauteur des heretiques." He was sent as ambassador from the King to the Council of Trent (1562), where he showed himself so hostile to Rome that he was obliged to withdraw to Venice, where he was ambassador for many years, and where Montaigne saw him in 1580, then seventy years old. Montaigne remarks in his *Journal de Voyage*: "Ses opinions penchent fort evidemment, en matière de nos affaires, vers les innovations Calviniennes."

I PUT forth formless and undetermined ideas, as those do who propound doubtful questions for discussion in the schools, not in order to establish the truth, but to search for it; and I submit them to the judgement of those to whom it belongs to regulate, not only my acts and my writings, but my thoughts as well. Condemnation of them will be as acceptable and useful to me as approval, (*c*) as I hold it execrable if any thing be found ignorantly or inadvertently set down by me contrary to the sacred prescriptions of the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church, in which I shall die and in which I was born. (*a*) And therefore, submitting always to the authority of their judgement who have full power over me, I thus deal rashly with all sorts of subjects, as now.[1] I know not if I am mistaken; but since by a special favour of the divine goodness, a certain form of prayer has been prescribed and dictated word for word by the mouth of God, it has always seemed to me that we ought to make use of it more commonly than we do; and if my advice were followed, on sitting down at table and on leaving it, on rising and on going to bed, and on all special actions for which we are in the habit of offering prayers, I should desire that it might be the paternoster which all Christians repeat, (*c*) if not by itself, at least always. (*a*) The Church can amplify and diversify prayers according to the needs of our instruction; for I know well that it is always the same substance and the same thing; but we should give to this one the prerogative that the people should have it constantly in their mouths; for it is certain that it says all that is necessary, and that it is well adapted for all occasions. (*c*) It is the only prayer that I use constantly, and I repeat it instead of changing it; whence it comes to pass that I remember no other so well as this.

(*a*) I was reflecting just now on whence comes this error of ours of having recourse to God in all our schemes and undertakings, (*b*) and of calling upon him in every sort of necessity and in whatsoever place our weakness desires aid, without considering whether the occasion be reasonable or

[1] These first sentences, exclusive of that added in 1595, first appeared in the second edition of the Essays, in 1582. In the edition of 1580 the Essay began with the next sentence.

unreasonable; and of invoking his name and his power, whatever condition and action we may be in, vicious though it may be. (*a*) He is indeed our sole and only protector, (*c*) and all things are possible to him to help us; (*a*) but although he deigns to honour us with this gracious fatherly relationship, he is meanwhile as just as he is kind, (*c*) and as he is powerful; but he employs his justice much more often than his power, (*a*) and favours us in accordance with its dictates, not according to our petitions.

(*c*) Plato, in his Laws, defines three varieties of harmful belief concerning the gods: That there are none; that they do not concern themselves with our affairs; that they deny nothing to our vows, offerings, and sacrifices. The first error, in his opinion, never remains unchanged in man from his childhood to his old age; the other two may obstinately persist.[1] (*a*) His justice and his power are inseparable. To no purpose do we implore his might in a bad cause. Our souls must be clean — at all events at the moment when we pray to him — and free from evil passions; otherwise we ourselves present to him the rods wherewith to chastise us. Instead of redressing our offence, we redouble it, offering to him whose forgiveness we have to ask, a heart full of irreverence and hatred. This is why I do not readily praise those whom I see praying to God most frequently and most commonly, if their actions following the prayer do not witness to me some amendment and reformation;

(*b*) si, nocturnus adulter,
Tempora Santonico velas adoperta cucullo.[2]

(*c*) And the state of mind of a man mingling religion with an execrable life seems to be in some sort more blameworthy than that of a man consistent with himself and depraved throughout. However, our church every day refuses to men persistent in any notorious wickedness the favour of entrance into communion with her.

(*a*) We pray from habit and custom, or, to speak more

[1] See Plato, *Laws*, book X.

[2] If, in your adultery by night, you veil your head with a Santonic cowl. — Juvenal, *Satire*, VIII, 144. The Romans derived the use of hoods, or cowls, from the inhabitants of Saintonge.

truly, we read or utter our prayers; it is, indeed, only show. (*b*) And it offends me to see the sign of the Cross made three times at the *Benedicite*, as many at Grace (and it offends me the more because it is a sign which I reverence and constantly use, [*c*] even when yawning), (*b*) and during all the other hours of the day see them occupied with hate, avarice, and injustice. To the vices their hour, to God his hour, as if by way of compensation and compromise. It is marvellous to see actions so different continue with such like tenor that there is no perceptible interruption or change, even on their confines and in the transition from one to the other. (*c*) What unnatural conscience can find peace when harbouring in the same lodging, in such harmonious and peaceful companionship, the crime and the judge? What does a man say whose licentiousness controls his thoughts, and who knows it to be most odious in the divine sight — what does he say to God when he speaks of it to him? He summons his wits, but soon falls back.[1] If the image of the divine justice and its presence did, as he declares, strike and chastise his soul, however short-lived might be his repentance, mere dread would so often turn his thoughts that way that he would speedily find himself master of those vices which have become habitual and enfleshed in him.

But what of those who base a whole life upon the fruits and emoluments of sin which they know to be mortal? How many accepted trades and vocations we have, of which the essence is vicious! And he who, confessing himself to me, told me that he had all his life professed and acted upon a religion damnable in his opinion and opposed to that which he had in his heart, — in order not to lose his reputation and the honour of his high affairs, — how could he shape this discourse in his mind? [2] In what language do they speak to the divine justice on this subject? Since for them repentance would consist in a manifest and palpable amendment, they lose both before God and before us the means of evidencing it. Are they so bold as to ask forgiveness without making satisfaction and without repentance? I maintain that the case is the same with the first as with the last; but

[1] *Il se rameine, mais soudain il rechoit.*

[2] *Comment pastissoit il ce discours en son courage?*

persistency is not so easy to prove in the wrong. This contrariety and changeableness of mind, so sudden and so violent, which they pretend to us, has to me a flavour of the miraculous. They represent to us a condition of interminable struggle.[1] How irrational seemed to me the opinion of those who, in these late years, were wont to charge every one in whom there was evident any clearness of mind, who professed the Catholic religion, that his profession was a pretence; and they maintained even, to do him honour, that, whatever he might say to save appearances, he could not fail inwardly to have his belief reformed on their foundation. It is a harmful disease to hold one's belief so strongly as to be persuaded that the contrary can not be believed; and even more harmful to be persuaded, with regard to such a mind, that it prefers I know not what superiority[2] of present fortune to the hopes and threats of eternal life. They may believe me: if any thing could have tempted my youth, strong desire for the hazard and difficulty which accompanied that recent enterprise would have had a large share in it.

(*a*) It is not without much reason, it seems to me, that the Church forbids the promiscuous, inconsiderate, and indiscreet use of the sacred and divine songs which the Holy Spirit dictated to David. We must not bring God into our acts save with reverence and heedfulness full of honour and respect. Those words are too divine to have no other use than to exercise our lungs and please our ears. It is from the inmost thought[3] that they should be brought forth, and not from the tongue. It is not right to allow a shop-boy, among his empty and frivolous thoughts, to entertain and amuse himself with them. (*b*) Nor surely is it right to see the holy book of the sacred mysteries of our faith tossed about in the hall and the kitchen. (*c*) They were formerly mysteries; now they serve for recreation and pastime. (*b*) Not casually and hastily ought so serious and reverend a study to be handled. It should be a purposed, sober action, to which we should always add this exordium of our divine service:

[1] *Indigestible agonie.*
[2] *Disparité:* a word of Montaigne's coinage.
[3] *Conscience.*

"Sursum corda," and should bring to it even the body so disposed in its bearing as to evidence a peculiar attention and reverence. (*c*) It is not a study for every body; it is a study for those persons who are consecrated to it, whom God calls to it. The wicked and the ignorant are the worse for it. It is not a story to tell; it is a story to revere, to fear, and to adore. Singular folk are they who think that they have brought it within the grasp of the people by putting it into the language of the people! Is it due to the words alone that they do not understand all that they find written? Shall I say more? by being brought this little nearer to it, they [1] are further removed from it. Pure ignorance, relying wholly on others, was much more salutary and wiser than is this verbal and futile knowledge, the nurse of presumption and rashness. (*b*) I believe also that the liberty every one has, to scatter abroad in so many different languages sayings so sacred and important, has in it much more of danger than of utility. The Jews, the Mohammedans, and nearly all others are wedded to and revere the tongue in which their mysteries were originally conceived; and it is forbidden, not unreasonably, to modify or change them. Are we sure that in the Basque country and in Brittany there are enough judges to confirm the translation made into their language? The universal Church has no decision to make more difficult or more important. In preaching and speaking, the interpretation is vague, free, changeable, and of but a part; this is different.

(*c*) One of our Greek historians justly blames his age in that the secrets of the Christian religion were scattered about the market-place, in the hands of the humblest artisans; that every one could discuss them and talk of them according to his own understanding; and that we ought to be greatly ashamed — we who, by God's grace, enjoy the pure mysteries of piety — to allow them to be profaned in the mouths of ignorant and vulgar persons, seeing that the Gentiles forbade Socrates, Plato, and the wisest men to examine and talk of the matters entrusted to the priests of Delphi. He says also that the factions of those of chief authority in the matter of theology [2] are armed, not with true

[1] That is, the people.

[2] That is, the different sects.

zeal, but with anger; that zeal is connected with divine reason and justice, and governs itself in an orderly and temperate way; but when it is governed by human passion, it changes to hatred and envy, and brings forth, instead of corn and grapes, tares and nettles.[1] And, justly too, that other,[2] counselling the Emperor Theodosius, said that disputations did not so much put to sleep schisms in the Church as awaken them, and animate heresies; that consequently it was needful to avoid all disputes and dialectical argumentations, and to rely solely upon the rules and formulas of the faith as established by the fathers. And the Emperor Androdicus,[3] having found in his palace some principal men contending with Lopadius [4] concerning a point that we consider of great importance, reprimanded them so severely as to threaten to throw them into the river if they continued.

Our young men and our women, in these days, undertake to instruct older and experienced persons in the matter of ecclesiastical laws; whereas the first of Plato's laws forbids them to enquire regarding the rightness of even the civil laws, which ought to hold the same place as divine commands; and while allowing old men to discuss them among themselves and with a ruler, he adds: "Provided that it be not in the presence of young and light-minded [5] persons." A bishop has written that there is, at the other side of the world, an island that the ancients called Discorides, pleasant from its fertility in all sorts of trees and fruits, and from the salubrity of the air, of which the inhabitants are a Christian people, having churches and altars which are graced with crosses only, without other images; very observant of fasts and feasts, careful in paying tithes to the priests, and so chaste that none of them is allowed to know more than one woman during his life; and, moreover, so content with fortune that, in the midst of the sea, the use of ships is unknown

[1] The Greek historian was Nicetas, but Montaigne took this and the following examples from Justus Lipsius's *Adversum Dialogistam*, etc.

[2] Sisinnius. [3] Andronicus.

[4] Montaigne misread his Lipsius here. The scene took place in a tent *near* Lopadius. Lopadius was a lake, not a man.

[5] *Profanes*. See Plato, *Laws*, book I. Plato does not distinctly name women.

to them; and so ignorant that of the religion which they so carefully observe they do not understand a single word [1] — an incredible thing to one unaware that the heathen, devout idolaters as they are, know naught of their gods but their names and images. The old beginning of *Menalippus*, a tragedy of Euripides, read thus: "O Jupiter — for of thee I know nothing save the name alone." [2]

(*b*) I have known, too, in my own time, fault to be found with certain writings because they are purely humane and philosophical, with no mixture of theology. He would not be without justification who should say, on the contrary: that the divine doctrine better keeps a place apart, as queen and supreme mistress; that it should be everywhere sovereign, not subordinate and subsidiary; and that peradventure examples in grammar, rhetoric, logic might more fitly be drawn from elsewhere than from so sacred a source, as also the subjects of plays, games, and public spectacles; that the divine statements,[3] when alone and in their own order, are considered with more veneration and reverence than when conjoined with human conceptions; that we more often see the error of theologians writing too much of human matters, than the other error, of humanists writing too little of theology: philosophy, says St. Chrysostom, has been long banished from the school of religion as a useless servant, and esteemed unworthy to see, even from the doorway in passing by, the tabernacle of the sacred treasures of the celestial doctrine; that human speech is lower in its forms, and should not be employed for the dignity, majesty, and teaching of divine communication. For my part I let him [4] say, (*c*) *verbis indisciplinatis*,[5] (*b*) fortune, destiny, chance, good luck, ill luck, and the gods, and other phrases, after his manner.

(*c*) I set forth ideas which are human and my own, simply as human ideas, considered by themselves, and not as if decreed and ordained by divine edict, incapable of doubt or

[1] See Bishop Osorio, *History of King Emmanuel of Portugal.*

[2] See Plutarch, *Of Love.*

[3] *Raisons.*

[4] That is, the "he . . . who should say, on the contrary," etc. See above.

[5] In unconsidered words. St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, X, 29.

debate; matters of opinion, not matters of faith; what I judge from my own faculties, not what I believe from God; as children display their attempts, that they may be instructed, not to instruct; in a laical, not a clerical manner, but always very religious. (*b*) And might not one say too, not unreasonably, that an edict forbidding all others than those who make express profession of it to undertake, except very sparingly, to write of the Religion would not lack some appearance of usefulness and justice, and would force me withal, perhaps, to be silent? [1]

(*a*) I have been told that even those who are not of our church none the less prohibit among themselves the use of the name of God in their common talk; they will not have it employed by way of interjection or of exclamation, or for asseveration or for comparison; wherein I think they are right. And in whatsoever way we call upon God for aid and company,[2] it must be seriously and devoutly. There is, it seems to me, an argument of this sort in Xenophon, where he shows that we should pray to God more rarely, inasmuch as we can not easily bring our souls often into that controlled, amended, and devout state in which they should be for this act; otherwise our prayers are not only idle and useless, but sinful. "Forgive us," we say, "as we forgive those who have wronged us." What do we mean by that, if not that we offer to him our souls freed from revenge and rancour? Yet we invoke God and his assistance in plotting our iniquities, (*c*) and invite him to our wrongdoing,

(*b*) Quæ, nisi seductis, nequeas committere divis.[3]

(*a*) The avaricious man prays to him for the vain and superfluous preservation of his riches; the ambitious man for his triumphs and the guidance of his passion; the thief employs him for aid in overcoming the risks and difficulties which impede the execution of his evil enterprises, or thanks him for the ease with which a traveller has had his throat cut. (*c*) At the wall of the house they are about to scale or blow

[1] *Et à moi avec, à l'avanture, de m'en taire.*

[2] *A nostre commerce et société.*

[3] Which you can confide to the gods only in private. — Persius, *Satires*, II, 4.

up, they say their prayers, their purpose and hope being full of cruelty, lust, greed.

(*b*) Hoc ipsum quo tu Jovis aurem impellere tentas,
Dic agedum, Staio: "Proh Juppiter! O bone," clamet,
"Juppiter!" At sese non clamet Juppiter ipse? [1]

(*a*) Marguerite, the Queen of Navarre, tells of a young prince, — and, though she does not give his name, his high rank makes him easily recognisable, — that, when going to an amorous assignation, and to lie with the wife of an advocate of Paris, his road being through a church, he never went into this holy place, either going to or returning from his enterprise, that he did not make his prayers and petitions. I leave you to judge to what end he employed the divine favour, his mind filled with that delightful meditation; none the less she alleges this as evidence of peculiar devoutness.[2] But this is not the only proof by which we could verify that women are scarcely fit to treat of matters of theology. A true prayer and a pious communion [3] with God can not befall a soul impure and submissive at that very time to the sway of Satan. He who calls God to his assistance whilst he is in vicious courses is like a cut-purse who should call the law to his aid, or like those who bring forward the name of God as witness to a lie.

(*b*) Tacito mala vota susurro
Concipimus.[4]

(*a*) There are few men who would dare to exhibit openly the secret petitions which they make to God.

Haud cuivis promptum est murmurque humilesque
susurros
Tollere de templis, et aperto vivere voto.[5]

[1] Come, then, tell, Staius, what you seek to utter in the ear of Jupiter. "Jupiter," he will cry, "gracious Jupiter!" But will not Jupiter exclaim in like manner? — Persius, *Satires*, II, 21.

[2] See the *Heptameron*, Journée III, Nouvelle 25.

[3] *Une religieuse reconciliation.*

[4] We softly murmur guilty prayers. — Lucan, V, 104.

[5] It would not be easy to every man to bring his murmured and humble whispers outside the temple, and to live in accordance with a vow publicly known. — Persius, *Satires*, II, 6.

This is why the Pythagoreans wished them to be public and heard by every one, so that no one should ask of him an unfit and unreasonable thing, like this man: —

> Clare cum dixit: Apollo!
> Labra movet, metuens audiri: pulchra Laverna,
> Da mihi fallere, da justum sanctumque videri;
> Noctem peccatis et fraudibus objice nubem.[1]

(*c*) The gods punished severely the wicked prayers of Œdipus by granting them to him: he had prayed that his children should determine between themselves by arms the succession to his throne; he was so unhappy as to see himself taken at his word.[2] We must not ask that all things be in accordance with our will, but that they be in accordance with what is best.[3]

(*a*) It seems, in truth, that we make use of our prayers (*c*) like a jargon and (*a*) like those who employ the sacred and divine words in sorceries and doings of magicians; and as if we reckoned that it is on the shaping,[4] or the sound, or the order of the words, or on our bearing, that the effect depends. For, having our minds filled with concupiscence, untouched by repentance or by any fresh communion with God, we go offering him those words which memory lends to our tongues, and hope to derive therefrom expiation of our sins. There is nothing so pleasant, so gentle, and so gracious as the divine law; she calls us to herself, blameworthy and detestable as we are; she holds out her arms to us and receives us into her bosom, however wicked, polluted, and begrimed we be and may have to be hereafter. But still, in return, we must look upon her with affectionate eyes; we must receive this pardon with thanksgiving; and during the moment, at least, that we address ourselves to her, the

[1] When he has called aloud: "Apollo!" he moves his lips, fearing to be heard, and adds: "Fair Laverna, grant to me to deceive all eyes; grant to me to seem just and pious; cast night over my sins and a cloud over my frauds. — Horace, *Epistles*, I, 16.59. The goddess Laverna was the protector of thieves and of all kinds of frauds, and was invoked by all who had need of darkness and concealment.

[2] See Plato, *Second Alcibiades*.

[3] *Mais qu'elles suivent la prudence.*

[4] *Contexture.*

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mind must be displeased with its sins and at enmity with the passions which have driven us to offend her. (*c*) Neither the gods, nor good men, says Plato, will accept a gift from a sinner.[1]

(*b*) Immunis aram si tetigit manus,
Non somptuosa blandior hostia
Mollivit aversos Penates,
Farre pio et saliente mica.[2]

CHAPTER LVII

OF AGE

Unlike the last, this Essay is scarcely changed from its first draft (one unimportant sentence was added in 1588 and another in 1595); and it has the pleasant, simple, conversational character that belongs to the "middle period" of the Essays. It need not detain us long. The chief thing to be noted in it is the impression Montaigne had of the usual length of human life: he thought that the common opinion gave many more years to it than facts justify. One might think that his impression was created by the conditions of violence in those days, so abounding in wars and pestilences, were not the causes of the deaths he happens to specify — falls and shipwrecks and pleurisies, as well as *la peste* — exactly those which lie outside the dangers of battlefields. Perhaps he is right in believing that "to die of old age is a rare, peculiar, and extraordinary death"; but he surely exaggerates not a little in saying that "it is an exemption which nature bestows by special favour upon a single person in the course of two or three centuries."

The next sentence, regarding "the age we have reached," is somewhat obscure. Cotton and his follower Hazlitt throw a brave bridge across by arranging it "that when once *forty years*, we should consider it as an age to which very few arrive." I take Montaigne's meaning to be that any age (of discretion) we have reached, we should consider as an age to which very few arrive. This interpretation is confirmed by the first sentence of the next paragraph, where he says that scarcely will a man preserve his life to the age of five-and-twenty.

There is much good sense in what he says here of the mistake made in not giving to young men the management of affairs. He thought men should be put to work early and kept at work late, "for the public

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[1] See Plato, *Laws*, book IV.

[2] If a guiltless hand has touched the altar, it has softened the irritated Penates with piously offered meal and sparkling salt quite as well as with a costly victim. — Horace, *Odes*, III, 23.17.

good." And there is much interest in what he says about the force of the soul in youth. He certainly goes too far in saying that the man who at twenty had not given proof of his powers will never do so; and one may question his belief that the greater number of noble deeds have been done by men under thirty: "deeds" perhaps, *actions* in the strict meaning of the word, yes; but *works;* it would be strange doctrine to say of the great men of the last generation, Lincoln and Gladstone and Darwin and Tennyson and Bismarck and Moltke and Ranke and Dollinger and Newman and one and another *leader*, that they were "great men after the age of thirty years in comparison with all others, but not in comparison with themselves."

One doubts even whether Montaigne was right in what he says about himself. If it be true, how delightful indeed must he have been at thirty!

In a later Essay ("Of Repentance," toward the end) he writes again of old age.

M. Villey has shown that the greater number of the Essays of the first Book were written in or about 1572. And he remarks: "At this period it is only by exception that he makes use of his own judgement. He seems to call his compositions *fantasies* [Book II, chapter 8], not *essais*, and the word *fantasies* there signified simply ideas, impressions on the brain; it did not at all imply the shade of originality, of the exceptional, which it has for us to-day. Perhaps towards the later of these years Montaigne had his title [Essais] in mind; still this is doubtful; at least, at this time he began to refer more to his judgement.[1] But it is only much later that he will fully avow the legitimate employment of it, that on every subject he will make use of a veritable sounding of his judgement and his experience."

I CAN NOT accept the way in which we fix the duration of our life. I see that the sages shorten it very much in comparison with common opinion. "What," said the younger Cato, to those who desired to prevent him from killing himself, "am I now at an age when I can be reproached with giving up life too soon?"[2] Yet he was only forty-eight. He considered that to be a

[1] When Montaigne wrote the dissertation which opens this Essay, it was already very clearly his purpose to test his judgement; but it suffices to compare this chapter (of which the date is uncertain) with the chapters of 1579, to perceive immediately how much Montaigne's conception changed in the interval. He now does not only test his judgement, he tests his life.

[2] See Plutarch, *Life of Cato of Utica*. Plutarch's account indicates that Cato was indignant with his friends, not because he thought himself of a fit age to die, but because he thought himself of a fit age to decide whether or not he should die.

very mature and very advanced age, considering how few men reach it; and they who declare that I know not what length of life,[1] which they call "natural," promises some years more, they might do so if they had a privilege that exempted them from the great number of accidents to which every one of us stands exposed by natural subjection, which may break off in the middle that length of life which they promise themselves. What folly it is to expect to die of the failure of strength which old age brings, and to set before ourselves that end to our duration, seeing that it is the rarest kind of all deaths and the least often experienced.[2] We call that alone natural, as if it were contrary to nature to see a man break his neck by a fall, suffocate in a shipwreck, be surprised by the plague or by a pleurisy; and as if our usual condition did not expose us to all these mishaps. Let us not flatter ourselves with fine words; we should rather, perchance, call natural what is general, common, and universal. To die of old age is a rare, peculiar, and extraordinary death, and in so much less natural than others; it is the last and uttermost sort of dying; the further removed it is from us, so much the less is it to be hoped for. It is, indeed, the bound beyond which we shall not go, and which the law of nature has prescribed as not to be overpassed; but it is a rare privilege from her to cause us to last till then. It is an exemption which she bestows by special favour upon a single person in the course of two or three centuries, relieving him from the obstacles and difficulties which she has strewn throughout that long career.

Therefore my judgement is that we should consider that the age we have reached is an age which few reach. Since, in ordinary progress, men do not go so far, it is a sign that we are well ahead; and since we have passed the usual limits, which is the true measure of our life, we ought not to hope to go much further. Having escaped so many causes of death, into which we see all the world stumble, we ought to recognise that such extraordinary fortune, outside of the common experience, as that which keeps us alive, is not likely to last much longer. It is an error in the very laws that they have this false idea: they declare that a man is not

[1] *Cours.* [2] *Et la moins en usage.*

capable of managing his property until he is twenty-five years of age; and scarcely will he retain until then the management of his life. Augustus cut five years from the old Roman decrees, and declared that for those who held the place of judge it sufficed to be thirty years old.[1] Servius Tullius exempted from service in war those knights who had passed the age of forty-seven;[2] Augustus released them at forty-five. To send men to an easy life before fifty-five or sixty years seems to me not very reasonable.

I am of opinion that our employment[3] and occupation should for the public good be lengthened as far as possible; but I find the great mistake to be at the other end, in not putting us at work early enough. That man[4] had been the law-giver of the whole world at nineteen, and he decreed that to judge of the placing of a gutter a man must be thirty years old! For my part, I think that at twenty years our minds have manifested whatever they are to be, and that they promise all that they will be able to do. Never did a mind which had not at that age given a very evident pledge of its power give proof of it afterwards. The natural qualities and virtues produce by that time or never all that is in them of strength and beauty. (*b*) If the thorn pricks not when 't is born, then 't will never prick at all, they say in Dauphiné. (*a*) Of all the noble deeds of men that have come to my knowledge, of whatever sort they may be, I believe that a greater portion of them, both in old times and in our own, would be numbered among those that were performed before the age of thirty than after, (*c*) yes, often in the lives of the same men. Can I not say this confidently of those of Hannibal, and of Scipio, his great adversary? Full half of their lives they lived on the glory acquired in their youth; great men afterward in comparison with all others, but not in comparison with themselves.

(*a*) As for myself, I hold it for certain that since that age[5] both my mind and my body have rather diminished than

[1] See Suetonius, *Life of Augustus*.
[2] See Aulus Gellius, X, 28.
[3] *Vocation*.
[4] Augustus.
[5] That is, thirty years.

amplified, and have gone back rather than forward. It is possible that, with those who employ their time well, knowledge and experience increase with years; but activity, promptitude, vigour, and other qualities much more a part of ourselves, more important and essential, languish and wither away.[1]

(*b*) Ubi jam validis quassatum est viribus ævi
Corpus, et obtusis ceciderunt viribus artus,
Claudicat ingenium, delirat linguaque mensque.[2]

Sometimes it is the body that yields first to old age, sometimes again it is the mind; and I have seen many whose brains have become enfeebled before their stomachs and their legs; and because it is a disease little perceptible to him who suffers from it, and obscure in its manifestations, so much the more is it dangerous. At this time (*a*) I complain of the laws, not because they leave us at work too late, but because they set us at work too late. It seems to me that, considering the frailty of our life, and to how many common and natural dangers it is exposed, we ought not to give so large a share in our early years to idleness and learning to live.

[1] Cf. the closing sentences of Book III, chap. 2, in Vol. III.

[2] When the body has already been enfeebled by the powerful weight of time, and the limbs have weakened, and all strength has been dulled, the intelligence staggers and the tongue and mind wander. — Lucretius, III, 451.

THE SECOND BOOK

CHAPTER I

OF THE INCONSTANCY OF OUR ACTIONS

Some of Montaigne's Essays seem as if he had *talked* them rather than written them, as if they had been reported by a better than Boswell; we seem to hear the delicate intonations of his voice, which convey his meaning almost as much as his words do, and to see the smile that throws light on the sentence. This Essay is not one of those, but rather merely opens the door of his mind to us when he is in a mood of quiet meditation, not inclined to say much. There is something almost more like Bacon than like Montaigne himself in its sobriety of tone, in the absence of personal reference (except for one interesting passage), and in its admirable *generalisations;* but Bacon never wrote with the *simplicity* of thought and quick vividness of phrase that here, as elsewhere, is the special force of Montaigne.

He keeps comparatively close to his subject throughout. In the opening pages he characteristically illustrates the inconstancy, if not of our actions, at least of our words, by the examples of Marius and Boniface VIII and Nero and Augustus. Such is the natural instability of our conditions of mind that it is foolish to try to form of any man an impression logically coherent, not self-contradictory — a foolish mistake to represent any man with an *air universel* by which all his actions are to be interpreted and with which they must harmonise.

He quotes Seneca's definition of the chief end of wisdom, that it is "to will and not will constantly the same things," and justly remarks that this is not *nostre façon ordinaire;* rather, that our words are so chameleon-like that on each one of our actions should be passed a separate judgement, since it is the force of circumstances more often than not that makes us do good or evil, well or ill.

It is almost as if we had two souls, so different may we be from ourselves; and Pascal has said the same thing, after Montaigne, in almost his words.

Even the valour of Alexander was not without its *taches*. All nobleness that is not ingrained in us forsakes us at moments. "Virtue chooses not to be followed but for herself, and if we sometimes borrow her mask for other use, she soon tears it from our face."

The last page sums up the whole Essay.

THOSE who employ themselves in observing the actions of men find themselves nowhere so embarrassed as in piecing them together and placing them in the same light; for they are wont to contradict one another in such strange fashion that it seems

impossible that they should come from the same person.[1] We find the younger Marius sometimes a son of Mars, sometimes of Venus.[2] Pope Boniface VIII, they say, entered into his dignity like a fox, bore himself therein like a lion, and died like a dog.[3] And who would believe that it could be Nero, that true embodiment of cruelty, who exclaimed, when they presented to him, according to custom, the sentence of a condemned criminal to sign: "Would God I had never learned to write!" [4] his heart was so pained at condemning a man to death! Such instances are so abundant, in truth, every one can supply so many for himself, that I find it strange to see, sometimes, intelligent people take the trouble to make these differences agree, since vacillation seems to me the most common and visible defect of our nature — witness this famous line of Publius, the comedian: —

Malum consilium est quod mutari non potest.[5]

(*b*) There is some reason for forming judgement of a man from the most usual features of his life; but, considering the natural instability of our customs and opinions, it has often seemed to me that even good writers mistake when they persist in representing us as of a changeless and unyielding contexture. They select a prevailing characteristic of a man, and adapt and interpret all his actions in accordance with that image; and if they can not sufficiently bend them, they attribute them to dissimulation. Augustus has eluded them; for there was in that man's actions, throughout his whole life, a diversity so manifest, sudden, and continual, that he has been let go entirely, and without decision, by the boldest judges.[6] I find it more difficult to believe in the steadfastness of men than in any other thing; and in nothing do I more easily believe than in their unsteadfastness. He who should judge a man in details and severally, part by part,

[1] *De mesme boutique.*

[2] See Plutarch, *Life of Marius.*

[3] See Jean Bouchet, *Annales d'Aquitaine.*

[4] See Seneca, *De Clementia*, II, 1.

[5] That purpose is bad that can not be changed. — Publius Syrus, in Aulus Gellius, XVII, 14.4. In 1580 Montaigne's translation of the line followed: *C'est un mauvais conseil qui ne se peut changer.*

[6] *Qu'il s'est faict lascher entier et indecis aux plus hardis juges.*

(*b*) would chance oftenest to speak the truth. (*a*) In all antiquity it is difficult to select a dozen men who have ordered their lives in a fixed and constant course, which is the chief aim of wisdom; for, to comprehend it all in a word, says an ancient writer, and to include in one rule all the rules of our life, "It is to wish and not to wish always the same thing; I would not deign," he says, "to add, provided that the wish be reasonable; for, if it be not reasonable, it is impossible that it should be always the same." [1] Truly I learned long ago that vice is only irregularity and lack of moderation, and consequently it is impossible to link constancy to it. It was a remark of Demosthenes, they say, that "the beginning of all virtue is reflection and deliberation, and its end and perfection, constancy." [2] If by our judgement we should take a certain road, we should choose the best; but no one has ever thought of that.

> Quod petiit spernit; repetit quod nuper omisit;
> Æstuat, et vitæ disconvenit ordine toto.[3]

Our usual practice is to follow the inclinations of our appetite, to the left, to the right, up-hill, down-hill, according as the wind of opportunity carries us; we think of what we desire only at the instant that we desire it,[4] and we change like that animal who takes on the colour of the spot on which he is placed. What we proposed a moment since, we soon change, and soon again retrace our steps; it is nothing but wavering and inconstancy.

> (*a*) Ducimur ut nervis alienis mobile lignum.[5]

We do not of ourselves advance; we are swept along, like things that float, now gently, now with violence, according as the water is rough or smooth.[6]

[1] See Seneca, *Epistle* 20.5.

[2] See the *Funeral oration on the soldiers who died at Chæronea.*

[3] What he sought, he disdains; he seeks again what just now he abandoned; he fluctuates, and contradicts himself throughout the whole course of his life. — Horace, *Epistles*, I, 1.98.

[4] See Seneca, *Epistle* 20.6.

[5] We are dragged about like a puppet moved by outside strings. — Horace, *Satires*, II, 7.82.

[6] See Seneca, *Epistle* 23.8.

(*b*) Nonne videmus
Quid sibi quisque velit nescire, et quærere semper
Commutare locum, quasi onus deponere possit? [1]

(*a*) Each day a new whim, and our moods shift with the shiftings of the weather.

Tales sunt hominum mentes, quali pater ipse
Juppiter auctifero lustravit lumine terras.[2]

(*c*) We fluctuate between different minds: we desire nothing freely, nothing absolutely, nothing constantly.[3] (*a*) In him who had prescribed and established in his mind definite laws and a definite policy, we should see shining brightly everywhere throughout his life a uniformity of conditions, an order, and an infallible connection between one thing and another. (*c*) Empedocles noticed this imperfection in the Agrigentines, that they abandoned themselves to pleasures as if they were to die the next day, and built as if they were never to die.[4] (*a*) Their description [5] would be very easy to make, as we see in the case of the younger Cato: he who has sounded one note of such a mind has sounded the whole; it is a harmony of perfectly concordant notes, which can not be untrue.[6] For us, on the contrary, there must be as many special judgements as there are actions. The safest way, in my opinion, would be to refer them to the surrounding circumstances, without entering upon a longer search, and without drawing other conclusions from them.

During the disorders of our unfortunate kingdom I was told that a young woman of my near neighbourhood had

[1] Do we not see that men know not what they wish, and are always seeking and changing place, as if they could lay down their burdens? — Lucretius, III, 1057.

[2] Men's minds vary like the daylight that Father Jupiter sends upon the fruitful lands. — Verses translated by Cicero (*Fragmenta Poematum*, lib. X) from the Odyssey (XVIII, 135), and taken by Montaigne from St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, V, 28.

[3] See Seneca, *Epistle* 52.1. Here Montaigne translates his author literally: *Fluctuamus inter varia consilia. Nihil libere volumus, nihil absolute, nihil semper.*

[4] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Empedocles.*

[5] *Discours;* that is to say, *la peinture de ces caractères .*

[6] Cf. Seneca, *Epistle* 31.8.

thrown herself out of a window, to escape the violence of a rascally soldier, who was quartered in her house; she did not kill herself by the fall, and, to carry out her undertaking, had tried to cut her throat with a knife, but was prevented; not, however, until she had severely wounded herself. She voluntarily confessed that the soldier had only urged her with requests and entreaties and presents, but that she had feared that he would finally come to compulsion; and thence arose the words and behaviour and blood that bore witness to her virtue, after the very fashion of another Lucrece. Now I have learned that, in fact, both before and since, she was a wench of not so unrelenting a temper. As the story goes: However fine and virtuous you be, when you have failed in your design, do not hastily conclude that your mistress is inviolably chaste: it does not follow that the muleteer will not have his chance.

Antigonus, having become attached to one of his soldiers for his courage and valour, ordered his physicians to treat him for a persistent internal disease which had long tormented him; and, after he was cured, perceiving that he went much more listlessly about his duties, asked him what had thus changed and unmanned him. "You yourself, sire," he replied, "having relieved me from sufferings because of which I made no account of my life." [1] One of the soldiers of Lucullus, having been despoiled by the foe, made a brilliant attack upon them, to avenge himself. When he had made good his loss, Lucullus, having conceived a high opinion of him, was sending him, with all the kindest words he could think of, on some hazardous exploit,

Verbis quæ timido quoque possent addere mentem; [2]

"Send some unfortunate despoiled soldier," he said;

Quantumvis rusticus: Ibit,
Ibit eo, quo vis, qui zonam perdidit, inquit; [3]

and flatly refused to go.

[1] See Plutarch, *Life of Pelopidas*.

[2] In language that might give courage even to a timid man. — Horace, *Epistles*, II, 2.36.

[3] Rustic though he was, he replied: "He who has lost his purse will go — he will go wherever you choose." — *Ibid.*, 39.

(*c*) When we read that, Mechmet [1] having outrageously berated Chasan, the leader of his janissaries, because he saw his troop broken into by the Hungarians, and that he bore himself remissly in the battle, Chasan, for all reply, rushed madly, alone, just as he was, arms in hand, upon the first body of the enemy that appeared, in which he was instantly engulfed [2] — this was not, perchance, so much self-justification as change of mood; not so much natural valour as newborn anger. (*a*) He whom you saw but yesterday so daring, think it not strange if you find him to-morrow as cowardly: either anger, or necessity, or company, or wine, or the sound of a trumpet had put the courage into him; it is not courage created by thought — these circumstances have fastened it on him; [3] it is no wonder if he becomes different in other contrary circumstances. (*c*) This so swift variation and contradiction that is observable in us has caused some [4] to imagine that we have two souls; others, two powers, which accompany and move us, each in its own way, one toward good, the other toward evil, it not being possible to attribute such sudden diversity to one sole source.

(*b*) Not only do chance winds sway me according to their direction, but I am also swayed and confused by the instability of my footing; [5] and he who closely observes about this finds himself scarcely twice in the same state. I give to my soul sometimes one point of view, sometimes another, according to the side to which I turn her. If I speak diversely about myself, it is because I see myself diversely. All contradictions exist in me at some moment and in some fashion. Shamefaced, insolent; (*c*) chaste, licentious; (*b*) talkative, taciturn; hardy,[6] effeminate; sharp-witted,[7] stupid; ill-humoured, courteous; a liar, truthful; (*c*) learned, ignorant; and open-handed and avaricious and prodigal — (*b*) all these things I see in myself in some degree, according as I turn myself about; and whoever studies himself very carefully finds in

[1] Mahomet.

[2] See Chalcondylas, VIII, 13.

[3] *Luy avoit mis le cœur au ventre; ce n'est un cœur ainsi formé par discours: ces circonstances le luy ont fermy.*

[4] The Manichæans.

[5] *Je me remue et trouble moy mesme par l'instabilité de ma posture.*

[6] *Laborieux.* [7] *Ingénieux.*

himself, aye, and in his very judgement, this same volubility and discordance. I have nothing to say of myself in complete, simple, and sound terms, without confusion and intermixture, or in a single word. *Distinguo* is the most universal part of my logic.

(*a*) Although I am always inclined to speak well of what is well, and to interpret favorably rather than otherwise those things which can be so interpreted, yet such is the strangeness of our condition that we are often impelled by vice itself to do well, if the doing well be not judged by the intention alone. Therefore one courageous deed should not be held to prove a man brave; he who would be so to good purpose must be so always and on all occasions. If it were a habit of courage and not a violent outburst, it would make a man equally valiant in all circumstances, the same alone as in company, the same in single combat as in a battle; for, whatever they may say, there is not one valour for the street and another for the camp; he would bear a sickness in his bed as bravely as a wound on the field, and would fear death no more in his house than in an assault. We ought not to see the same man charge into the breach with brave confidence, and, later, lament like a woman over the loss of a lawsuit or of a son. (*c*) When, being faint-hearted with regard to obloquy, he is undaunted in poverty; when, shrinking from the barber's razor, he is bold before the swords of his foes, the act is laudable, not the man.[1] Many Greeks, says Cicero, can not look upon the enemy, but are stout-hearted in sickness; as to the Cimbri and Celtiberians, just the reverse; *nihil enim potest esse æquabile, quod non a certa ratione proficiscatur.*[2] (*b*) There is no courage more extreme of its kind than that of Alexander; but it is of only one kind, nor is it perfect everywhere, and universal; (*c*) incomparable as it is, it still has its blemishes; (*b*) which is the reason that we see him so violently disturbed by the flitting suspicions that he conceives of the machinations of those about him against his life, and carrying himself in his investigations with such vehement and rash injustice, and with a fear that

[1] See Seneca, *Epistle* 120.

[2] Nothing can be uniform that does not proceed from a fixed principle. — Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, II, 27.

subverts his natural good sense. The superstition, too, with which he was so strongly infected [1] bears some likeness to pusillanimity; (*c*) and the excess of his repentance for the murder of Clytus is also evidence of the irregularity of his mind.[2] (*a*) Our doings are but borrowed fragments: (*c*) *voluptatem contemnunt, in dolore sunt molliores, gloriam negligunt, franguntur infamia;*[3] (*a*) and we seek to acquire honour falsely. Virtue will not be followed but for herself; and if we sometimes borrow her mask for other use, she soon tears it from our face. It is a bright and strong dye when the soul is once steeped in it, and it does not depart without taking the substance with it.[4] Therefore, to judge a man, we must long and carefully follow his path; if unchangeableness does not maintain itself throughout on its own base; (*c*) *cui vivendi via considerata atque provisa est;*[5] (*a*) if the variety of events makes him change his pace (I will say his road, for the pace may be hastened or slackened by them),[6] let him go — such a one is driven by the wind, as the motto of our Talebot declares.

It is no wonder, says an ancient writer, that chance has such power over us, since it is by chance that we live.[7] He who has not directed his life in general to a certain end, for him it is impossible to adjust the separate acts; [8] for him it is impossible to arrange the pieces, who has not a figure of the whole in his head. Of what use is it to him who knows not what he has to paint, to provide himself with colours? No one makes a definite plan of his life, and we reflect upon it only by little and little. The archer must first know at what he aims, and then adapt his hand, the bow, the string, the arrow, and his motions accordingly. Our judgements go astray because they have no direction and no aim.[9] No

[1] Arrian refers frequently to this weakness of Alexander.

[2] See Plutarch, *Life of Alexander*.

[3] Pleasure they despise, but in suffering they are weak; about fame they are indifferent, but by ill-repute they are cast down. — Cicero, *De Off.*, I, 21. This quotation is not in the edition of 1595.

[4] *Qu'elle n'emporte la piece.*

[5] [If] his way of life has been considered and planned in advance. — Cicero, *Paradoxa*, V, 1.

[6] See Seneca, *Epistle* 20.2.

[7] See *Epistle* 71.

[8] See *Epistle* 93.

[9] See *Epistle* 71, for the inspiration of the last five sentences.

wind is fair for him who has no purposed port.[1] I do not agree with the judgement that was pronounced regarding Sophocles, against the complaint of his son, from seeing one of his tragedies, that he was competent to manage his domestic affairs.[2] (*c*) Nor do I find the surmise of the Parians, who were sent to correct the condition of the Milesians, sufficiently well founded for the consequence they drew from it: in visiting the island, they noted the estates that were best cultivated and the country houses that were managed best; and having recorded the names of their owners, when they had assembled the citizens of the town, they appointed those owners as the new governors and magistrates, considering that, being careful about their private affairs, they would be so about public matters.[3]

(*a*) We are all odds and ends, and of a contexture so shapeless and various that each part every moment plays its own game, and there is as much difference between us and ourselves as between us and another. (*c*) *Magnam rem puta unum hominem agere.*[4] (*a*) Since ambition can teach men valour and temperance and liberality, aye, and justice; since greed can implant in the heart of a shop-boy, brought up in obscurity and idleness, the boldness to throw himself far from his domestic fireside into a fragile skiff, at the mercy of the waves and of angry Neptune; and since it also teaches discretion and prudence; and since Venus herself gives resolution and confidence to the youth still subject to discipline and the rod, and inspires with courage the tender hearts of maidens in their mothers' arms,—

(*b*) Hac duce, custodes furtim transgressa jacentes,
Ad juvenem tenebris sola puella venit,[5] —

[1] *Nul vent fait pour celuy qui n'a point de port destiné.* "No helpe serves him that runnes uncertain courses (or knows not where to end them)." — Cotgrave.

[2] See Cicero (*De Senectute*), who says that Sophocles recited the play to the judges; see also Plutarch, *Whether an aged man*, etc.

[3] See Herodotus, V, 29.

[4] Consider it to be a great thing to be always one and the same man. — Seneca, *Epistle* 120.

[5] Under her guidance the maiden, furtively evading the watchers at the door, comes alone, in the dark, to her lover. — Tibullus, II, 1.75.

(*a*) it is not the work of a well-tempered mind to judge us simply by our outward actions; we must search the inward parts, and see by what springs the impulse is given; but, inasmuch as this is a high and hazardous undertaking, I would that fewer persons dealt with it.

CHAPTER II

OF DRUNKENNESS

As, in the last Essay, man is "of a shapeless and various contexture," so is the world only "variety and dissimilarity." It might seem from this opening sentence as if this Essay were a continuation of the last; but this is not exactly so true. Montaigne's point here is the difference between *vices*, their respective rank and measure.

"Drunkenness," he says, "seems to me a gross and brutish vice." But antiquity has not greatly decried this. Then he enters into some details regarding himself and his father. Then, "Let us go back to our bottles," he says; and he dwells on the advantages of drinking, especially for old men, passing into an admirable passage, which again seems to connect itself with the previous Essay: "To what vanity does the good opinion we have of ourselves carry us!" and leaving here all thought of "drunkenness," the Essay concludes with a long paragraph — a *cento* of quotations — to illustrate the theme that the "boastings" of those who defy the ills of life are a form of divine madness, and that "wisdom is a steady control of our souls."

No one of Montaigne's Essays is perhaps so remote from modern thought as this in its point of view of the subject it treats. Montaigne thought of drunkenness as a personal, not a national, vice; as being more or less degrading to individuals, not as injuring classes and seriously affecting the life of a people. He wrote when it was wine, not alcohol, that was drunk. He wrote of all drinking-songs in the spirit of Omar Khayyam, with the liberal feeling of the ancient sages, in the tone of Pitt and his fellows, in the belief of St. Paul that "wine maketh glad the heart of man." His own nature was averse to drinking; he thought it *un vice grossier et brutal*, but one that harmed the public less than other vices. In the monstrous growth it has attained in the last hundred years, we now recognise it as one of our most terrible public enemies; and Montaigne's half-ironical words, that for pleasure's sake "we should never refuse an opportunity to drink," sound strangely enough.

More than half of this Essay was added in 1595 — and it may be observed that of the three quotations in it from Plato, one is derived through Seneca, and the other two (direct) belong to the later-written portions. This will be found to be the case elsewhere and is an indication of the period of Montaigne's study of Plato.

The subject of this Essay was treated of more than once by Seneca, and repeatedly by Pierre Messie, Montaigne's contemporary, in his *Leçons*, from very similar points of view.

THE world is all variety and dissimilarity. The vices are all alike in this — that they are all vices; and this perchance is the meaning of the Stoics; [1] but, although they are equally vices, they are not equal vices; and that he who has gone a hundred paces beyond the limits, —

> Quos ultra citraque nequit consistere rectum,[2] —

is in no worse plight than he who is only ten paces beyond, is not believable; and that sacrilege is no worse than the theft of a cabbage from a garden.

> Nec vincet ratio hoc, tantundem ut peccet idemque
> Qui teneros caules alieni fregerit horti,
> Et qui nocturnus divum sacra legerit.[3]

There is in this as much difference as in any thing else. (*b*) The confusion of the rank and measure of sins is dangerous; murderers, traitors, tyrants gain too much by it. It is not reasonable that their conscience should find comfort in the fact that another man is idle, or lewd, or less assiduous in piety. Every one lays weight on his fellow's sin and makes light of his own.[4] Our instructors even arrange them often wrongly, to my thinking. (*c*) As Socrates said that the chief office of wisdom was to distinguish between goods and evils,[5] so we, in the best of whom is always something vicious,[6] ought to say the same of the art of distinguishing between vices, without which, and that very exact, the virtuous and the wicked remain confounded together and unknown.

[1] See Plutarch, *The Contradictions of the Stoics*.

[2] On either side [of those limits] the right can not exist. — Horace, *Satires*, I, 1.107.

[3] Nor can reason prove that he who breaks down the tender cabbages of another's garden and he who by night steals objects consecrated to the gods sin equally and alike. — Horace, *Satires*, I, 3.115.

[4] *Et esleve le sien.*

[5] See Plato, *Charmides*.

[6] *A qui le meilleur est tousjours en vice.*

(*a*) Now drunkenness, among the others, seems to me a gross and brutish vice. In others the mind plays a greater part; and there are vices which have I know not what of high quality,[1] if I may say so. There are some with which are mingled knowledge, diligence, valour, prudence, skill, and adroitness; but this one is altogether corporeal and earthly. And so the grossest of all the nations that exist to-day is the only one which holds it in esteem. The other vices modify the understanding; this one overturns it (*b*) and dulls the bodily senses.

Cum vini vis penetravit,
Consequitur gravitas membrorum præpediuntur
Crura vacillanti, tardescit lingua, madet mens,
Nant oculi; clamor, singultus, jurgia gliscunt.[2]

(*c*) The worst state of man is that wherein he loses knowledge and control of himself. (*a*) And they say of it, among other things, that, as the must fermenting in a vessel drives to the surface all that there is at the bottom, so wine causes the most intimate secrets to flow forth from those who have taken it to excess.[3]

(*b*) Tu sapientium
Curas et arcanum jocoso
Consilium retegis Lyæo.[4]

(*a*) Josephus narrates that he wormed much [5] from a certain ambassador whom the enemy had sent him, by making him drink all he could carry.[6] But Augustus, having entrusted to Lucius Piso, who conquered Thrace, his most private affairs, never found that he had misreckoned; nor did Tiberius with Cossus, to whom he unburdened himself of all his thoughts, though we know them to have been so

[1] *Genereux.*

[2] When the potency of wine has penetrated a man . . . there follows a heaviness of the limbs; his legs are hampered and he reels; his tongue stammers, his mind is besotted, his eyes swim; shouts, hiccoughs, wranglings arise. — Lucretius, III, 476, 478–80.

[3] See Seneca, *Epistle* 83.

[4] The troubles of wise men and their secret thoughts thou dost unveil by the aid of Lyæus [Bacchus]. — Horace, *Odes*, III, 21.14.

[5] *Tira le ver du nez.*

[6] See Josephus, *De Vita Sua*, § 44.

intemperate that it was often necessary to carry them both drunk from the Senate,[1] —

Externo inflatum venas de more Lyæo.[2]

(*c*) And the plot to kill Cæsar was made known as trustfully as to Cassius, a water-drinker, to Cimber, although he was often drunk; wherefore he remarked jestingly: "How should I carry a tyrant, who can not carry wine!" [3] (*a*) We see our Germans, when drowned in wine, remember their quarters, the pass-word, and their rank: —

(*b*) nec facilis victoria de madidis, et
Blæsis, atque mero titubantibus.[4]

(*c*) Je n'eusse pas creu d'ivresse si profonde, estouffée et ensevelie, si je n'eusse leu cecy dans les histoires: qu'Attalus ayant convié a souper pour lui faire une notable indignité ce Pausanias qui, sur ce mesme subject, tua depuis Philippus roy de Macedoine (roy portant par ses belles qualitez tesmoignage de la nourriture qu'il avoit prinse en la maison et compaignie d'Epaminondas), il le fit tant boire qu'il peust abandonner sa beauté, insensiblement, comme le corps d'une putain buissonnière, aux muletiers et nombre d'abjects serviteurs de sa maison.[5] Et ce que m'apprint une dame que j'honore et prise singulierement, que près de Bordeaux, vers Castres, où est sa maison, une femme de village, veufve, de chaste reputation, sentant les premiers ombrages de grossesse, disoit a ses voisines qu'elle penseroit estre enceinte si ell' avoit un mari. Mais, du jour à la journée, croissant l'occasion de ce soupçon et en fin jusques à l'evidence, ell' en vint là de faire declarer au prosne de son église que qui seroit consent de ce faict en l'advouant, elle promettoit de

[1] See Seneca, *Epistle* 83.

[2] With veins inflated as usual by Lyæus yesterday. — Virgil, *Bucolics*, VI, 15. The original is: *Inflatum hesterno venas, ut semper, Iaccho.*

[4] See Seneca, *Epistle* 83.

[4] Nor is victory easy over men besotted and stammering and staggering from strong wine. — Juvenal, *Satire* XV, 47. The original is *Adde quod facilis*, etc.; and Montaigne makes Juvenal say exactly the opposite of what he really says.

[5] See Diodorus Siculus, XVI, 26.

le lui pardonner, et, s'il le trouvoit bon, de l'espouser. Un sien jeune valet de labourage, enhardy de cette proclamation, declara l'avoir trouvée, un jour de feste, ayant bien largement prins son vin, si profondement endormie près de son foyer, et si indecemment, qu'il s'en estoit peut servir sans l'esveiller. Ils vivent encore maries ensemble.

(*a*) It is certain that antiquity did not greatly decry this vice; indeed, the writings of several philosophers speak very mildly of it; and even among the Stoics there are those who advise taking the liberty sometimes to drink one's utmost, and intoxicate one's self, to cheer the soul.

(*b*) Hoc quoque virtutum quondam certamine magnum
Socratem palmam promeruisse ferunt.[1]

(*c*) And that censor and correcter of others, (*a*) Cato, has been charged with drinking too much.[2]

(*b*) Narratur et prisci Catonis
Sæpe mero caluisse virtus.[3]

(*a*) Cyrus, a king so renowned, alleges, among his other praiseworthy qualities, showing his superiority to his brother Artaxerxes, that he was the better drinker.[4] And in the nations that were best ordered and governed, this habit of drinking hard was very common. I have heard Silvius, an excellent physician of Paris, say that to guard against the faculties of our stomach becoming sluggish, it is well to rouse them up once a month by this excess, and to spur them, to prevent them from becoming dull;[5] (*b*) and some one has written that the Persians, after drinking, took counsel concerning their most important affairs.[6]

[1] Also on this contest of ability, they say that the great Socrates sometimes won the palm. — Pseudo-Gallus, *Elegy*, I, 47.

[2] See Seneca, *De Tranquillitate Vitæ*, XV. He is speaking of Cato of Utica, not Cato the Censor.

[3] It is told that the strength of old Cato was often warmed with wine. — Horace, *Odes*, III, 21.11.

[4] See Plutarch, *Life of Artaxerxes;* also *Table-Talk.*

[5] In the edition of 1588 there follows here this sentence: *Platon luy attribue ce mesme effect au service de l'esprit*, which first appeared in that edition.

[6] See G. Bouchet, *Les Serées*, I, 1; Herodotus, I, 133.

(*a*) My taste and my constitution are more hostile to this vice than my judgement; for besides that I readily submit my beliefs to the authority of ancient opinions, I consider this indeed a worthless and senseless vice, yet less deceitful and harmful than the others, all of which more directly injure the body of society.[1] And if we can not give ourselves pleasure without its costing us something, as they maintain, I think that this vice costs our conscience less than the others; besides which it is not of difficult preparation or hard to find; a consideration not to be despised. (*c*) A man advanced in station and in years reckoned this among three principal enjoyments which he told me remained to him in life; and where can one look for them more properly than among the natural ones? But he had the wrong idea of it.[2] Fastidiousness is to be avoided, and careful selection of the wine. If you base your enjoyment on drinking delicate wines, you oblige yourself to suffer in drinking the other kinds. The taste must be wider and freer; to be a good drinker, the palate must not be so dainty. The Germans drink almost every kind of wine with equal pleasure. Their object is to swallow it rather than to taste it. They have thus the better bargain; their enjoyment is more abundant and nearer at hand. Secondly, to drink in the French fashion at two meals, and moderately, is to restrict too much the favours of this god; more time and persistency are necessary. The ancients used to pass whole nights at this business, and often joined the days to them; and, indeed, we should make our regular allowance more liberal and more fixed. I have seen a great nobleman of my time, a personage of eminent undertakings and famous triumphs, who, without effort and in the course of his regular meals, rarely drank less than five pottles [3] of wine, and afterward appeared only too wise and shrewd, at the expense of our affairs. The pleasure which we wish to count on throughout our life should occupy more space in it. Like shop-boys and workingmen, we should never refuse an opportunity to drink, and should have that desire always in our minds. It seems as if we abridge the use

[1] *Qui choquent quasi tous de plus droit fil la société publique.*
[2] *Mais il la prenoit mal.*
[3] *Lotz.* "Lot = (about) our pottle." — Cotgrave.

of wine every day, and as if in our houses, as I saw in my childhood, breakfasts and luncheons and suppers were more frequent and usual than now. Does this mean that in some respect we are moving toward reform? Truly, no; but it may mean that we are much more given over to lechery than our fathers were. These are two occupations which in their full strength hinder one another. On the one hand this latter [1] has weakened our stomachs, and on the other hand sobriety serves to make us more brisk and more ardent [2] in the practice of love.

It is wonderful what tales I have heard my father tell of the chastity of his time. It was for him to talk of this, being well fitted, both by art and nature, for intercourse with ladies. He talked little and agreeably, and was wont to bring into his conversation ornaments from books in the vulgar tongue,[3] especially in Spanish; and among Spanish books, the one that they called *Marcus Aurelius* [4] was familiar to him. His manner was marked by a gentle, humble, and very courteous gravity; he took peculiar care of the niceness and propriety of his person and of his clothes, whether on foot or on horseback; he had an unheard-of faithfulness to his word, and a conscientiousness and piety leaning in general rather toward superstition than toward the other extreme. For a man of small stature he was abounding in strength, and of an upright and well-proportioned figure, with an agreeable face, of rather dark complexion; skilful and graceful in all gentlemanly exercises. I have seen lately canes loaded with lead with which they say he exercised his arms to prepare to throw the bar or the stone, or for fencing; and shoes with leaded soles to make him the lighter in running and jumping. In vaulting,[5] he has left a memory of little miracles. I have seen him at past sixty laugh at our agility, throw himself in his furred gown on a horse, make the circuit of the table on his thumbs, and scarcely ever go up to his chamber without springing over three or four stairs at a time. Regarding my subject, he said that, in a whole province, there was hardly a woman of quality who

[1] Lechery.
[2] *Damerets.*
[3] That is, not in Latin.
[4] By Bishop Antonio de Guevara.
[5] *Du primsaut.*

had an ill name; he told of strange private relations — particularly of his own — with virtuous women, free from any suspicion; and for his own part, he swore solemnly that he came pure to his marriage, and yet it was after he had served a very long time in the wars on the other side of the mountains, of which he left us a manuscript journal written by his own hand, following point by point what took place, both as to public affairs and as to his own private concerns. Moreover, he was married when well advanced in years, in the year 1528, which was his thirty-third, as he was returning from Italy.

Let us return to our bottles. (*a*) The discomforts of old age, which have need of some support and invigoration, might reasonably create in me a desire for this license, for it is almost the last pleasure that the passage of years steals from us. The natural warmth, say boon companions, is at first in the feet; that belongs to childhood. Thence it ascends to the middle region, where it is fixed for a long time, and where it produces, in my opinion, the only true pleasures of bodily life. (*c*) All other pleasures are dull in comparison. (*a*) Finally, like a vapour which keeps ascending and spreading, it reaches the throat, where it makes its last stop. (*b*) I can not, however, understand how a man can prolong the pleasure of drinking beyond thirst, and forge by his imagination an artificial and unnatural appetite. My stomach would not go so far; it has enough to do to manage what it takes for its need.

(*c*) My natural inclination is not to care for drinking except after eating; and for this reason, my last drink is always the longest.[1] Anacharsis was amazed that the Greeks drank from larger glasses at the end of the meal than at the beginning.[2] It is, to my thinking, for the same reasons that the Germans do so, who begin then their contention of drinking as much as they can. Plato forbids children to

[1] These sentences, not found in the Bordeaux copy of 1588, were added in 1595: *Et par ce qu'en la viellesse, nous apportons le palais encrassé de reume, ou alteré par quelque autre mauvaise constitution, le vin nous semple meilleur, à mesme que nous avons ouvert et lavé nos pores. Aumoins il ne m'advient guere, que pour la premiere fois j'en prenne bien le goust.*

[2] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Anacharsis.*

drink wine before they are eighteen, and to get drunk before forty; but those who are past forty, them he directs to take pleasure in it, and to blend rather freely with their feasts the influence of Dionysus, that kindly god who restores gaiety to men, and youth to graybeards; who tempers and softens the passions of the soul as iron is softened by fire; and in his Laws he considers such drinking meetings useful, provided that there is a leader to restrain and rule them, drunkenness being a good test and sure of any man's nature, and at the same time to give to persons of mature age the spirit to make merry with dances and music, things useful which they dare not undertake in their sober senses; that wine is capable of giving discipline to the soul, and health to the body. But certain restrictions, borrowed in part from the Carthaginians, please him: that it should be used sparingly on warlike expeditions; that every ruler and every judge should abstain from it when about to execute his charge or to consult on public affairs; that we should never give the day to it, the time due to other occupations, nor that night when a man proposes to get children.[1] It is said that the philosopher Stilpo, weakened by old age, purposely hastened his end by drinking pure wine.[2] The same cause, but not designed, stifled the strength, broken down by years, of the philosopher Arcesilaus.[3]

(*a*) But it is an old and odd question whether the soul of a wise man is of a nature to be overcome by the power of wine,[4]

Si munitæ adhibet vim sapientiæ.[5]

To what vanity does the good opinion we have of ourselves carry us! The best-governed soul in the world and the most perfect has only too much to do to keep on her feet and to guard herself from falling, through her own weakness. Of a thousand there is not one soul that is upright and stable during an instant of her life; and it may be doubted whether, in consequence of her natural condition, she can ever be so. But to associate constancy with this — that is her supreme

[1] See Plato, *Laws*, book II.
[2] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Stilpo*.
[3] See Idem, *Life of Arcesilaus*.
[4] Cf. Seneca, *Epistle* 83.
[5] If to fortified nature it does violence. — Horace, *Odes*, III, 28.4.

perfection; I mean, when nothing should stand in her way, which a thousand casualties may do. It is all very well for Lucretius, that great poet, to philosophise and brace himself — behold, he is driven mad by a love-philter.[1] Is it thought that apoplexy would not trouble the brains of Socrates as well as of a porter? Some persons have forgotten their own names by dint of illness, and a slight wound has overturned the judgement of others. However much of a sage he may be, after all, he is a man; what is there more unable to support itself, more miserable, more nearly nothing? Wisdom does not overcome our natural conditions.

(*b*) Sudoresque ita et pallorem exsistere toto
Corpore, et infringi linguam vocemque aboriri,
Caligare oculos, sonere auris, succidere artus;
Denique concidere, ex animi terrore videmus.[2]

(*a*) He[3] must involuntarily close his eyes before the blow that threatens him; he must involuntarily tremble, standing on the edge of a precipice, (*c*) like a child, Nature having willed to keep in her own hands these slight tokens of her authority, inexpugnable by our reason or by Stoic courage — to teach him his mortality and our lack of spirit. (*a*) He turns pale with fear, he reddens with shame, he groans with the colic, (*c*) if not despairingly and noisily, at least in broken and hoarse tones, —

(*a*) Humani a se nihil alienum putet.[4]

The poets, (*c*) who imagine all things at pleasure, (*a*) dare not free from tears even their heroes: —

Sic fatur lachrymans, classique immittit habenas.[5]

[1] See Crinitus, *Life of Lucretius*.

[2] The whole body sweats and is pallid; the tongue falters and the voice dies away; the eyes are clouded, the ears ring, and the limbs fail; in short, from the soul's terror we see them succumb. — Lucretius, III, 154.

[3] That is, the sage.

[4] He finds himself no stranger to what belongs to humanity. — Terence, *Heautontimoroumenos*, I, 1.25. Montaigne gives the familiar text a meaning to suit his purpose.

[5] So he spoke, weeping, and set sail with his fleet. — Virgil, *Æneid*, VI, 1.

Let it suffice him to bridle and moderate his inclinations, for it is not in him to overcome them. Even our Plutarch himself, so perfect and excellent a judge of human actions, at the thought of Brutus and Torquatus putting their sons to death, can but doubt whether virtue could go so far, and whether those personages had not rather been moved by some other passion.[1] All actions outside the ordinary limits are subject to a sinister interpretation, because our insight no more reaches to what is above it than to what is beneath.

(*c*) Let us leave on one side that other sect which makes express profession of scorn.[2] But when, in the very sect which is considered the most submissive,[3] we hear these boastful words of Metrodorus: *Occupavi te, Fortuna, atque cepi; omnesque aditus tuos interclusi, ut ad me aspirare non posses;*[4] when Anaxarchus, placed, by the command of Nicocres, tyrant of Cyprus, in a stone trough,[5] and beaten with an iron mallet, incessantly exclaims: "Strike, crush! 'T is not Anaxarchus, 't is his outer shell that you make havoc of!"[6] (*a*) when we hear our martyrs cry out to the tyrant from the midst of the flame: "This side is roasted enough; chop it up, eat it, it is cooked; now begin on the other";[7] when, in Josephus, we hear of that child all torn with biting pincers and pierced by the awls of Antiochus, who continued to defy him, crying in a steady and resolute voice: "Tyrant, you waste your time; behold I am at ease; where is the pain, where the torments with which you threatened me? Do you know no more than this of them? My steadfastness causes you more torment than I feel from your cruelty. O cowardly scoundrel![8] you give way and I take on new strength; make me bewail myself, make me bow the

[1] See Plutarch, *Life of Publicola.* He refers to Brutus only.

[2] The Stoics.

[3] The Epicureans.

[4] I have anticipated thee and mastered thee, O Fortune; and I have closed all the avenues by which thou couldst approach me. — Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, V, 9.

[5] *Un vesseau de pierre.*

[6] *Que vous pilez.* See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Anaxarchus.*

[7] Prudentius, *Of Crowns;* the words are attributed to St. Lawrence.

[8] *Lache belistre.*

knee, make me yield, if you can; give courage to your satellites and your executioners; see how their heart fails them — they can do now no more; arm them, egg them on!" [1] surely we must admit that in those souls there was some disorder, some madness, however holy it may have been. When we come to those Stoic sallies: "I would rather be mad than pleasure-loving" — Μανείειν μᾶλλον ἢ ἡθείειν;[2] when Sextius tells us that he would rather be shackled by pain than by pleasure; when Epicurus pretends to be fondled by the gout,[3] and, refusing ease and health, light-heartedly defies all ills, and, despising the less bitter sufferings, scorning to struggle against them and fight with them, calls for and desires great torments — piercing torments (*b*) and worthy of him, —

(*a*) Spumantemque dari, pecora inter inertia, votis
Optat aprum, aut fulvum descendere monte leonem,[4] —

who does not judge that these are outbursts of a courage that has thrown itself out of its natural place? Our soul could not attain to such a height from her seat; she must needs leave it, and raise herself up, and, taking the bit in her teeth, forcibly carry her man so far that afterward he is himself astonished at what he has done; as in the feats of war the heat of the combat often impels gallant soldiers to venture upon matters of such peril that, when they have come to themselves, they are the first to be struck with astonishment; as also poets are often surprised by admiration for their own works and can not again find the track along which they have run so fine a career; it is what is called, in them also, passion and madness.[5] And as Plato says that a man whose mind is at rest knocks in vain at the door of poetry, so Aristotle says that no surpassing soul is exempt

[1] See Josephus, *History of the Maccabees*, VIII.

[2] I would rather be mad than indulge in pleasure. — A saying of Antisthenes. See Aulus Gellius, IX, 5; Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Antisthenes*.

[3] *Entreprend de se faire mignarder à la goute.* Cf. Seneca, *Epistles* 66, 67, 92, *passim*.

[4] He prays that a foaming boar may come amid these tame herds, or a tawny lion descend from the mountain. — Virgil, *Æneid*, IV, 158.

[5] *Ardeur et manie.*

from a mixture of madness; [1] and he is right in calling madness every outburst of feeling, however laudable it may be, which goes beyond our proper judgement and reason, inasmuch as wisdom is a steady control of our soul, which she guides with regularity and equableness, (*b*) and makes herself surety for it.

(*c*) Plato reasons thus: that the faculty of prophesying is beyond our nature; that we must be outside of ourselves when we use it; our knowledge must needs be befogged either by sleep or by some malady, or be conveyed from its place by a divine ravishment.[2]

CHAPTER III

A USAGE [3] OF THE ISLAND OF CEA

The occasion for this title does not appear till the last page of the Essay, and it is then found to be inaccurate. It is not a *custom* of Cea that suggested these pages, but an incident that occurred there when the Consul Sextus Pompeius was passing through the island. The narrative of the voluntary death by poison, with Socratic calmness, of a woman of ninety "of great position," in the presence of the consul, which Montaigne gives here, he took from Valerius Maximus, who was in the consul's suite.

The many preceding pages are a discussion of the causes and the justifications of voluntary death, with full recognition of the cowardice that may be shown in the desertion of life and the fortitude that may be shown in enduring it; the writer points out on one side what fantastic and foolish humours have induced the act, and on the other, some diseases which give a man good right to destroy himself, chief among them the stone. Some seven or eight years after Montaigne wrote of this disease, he was himself attacked by it, and it is always to be remembered that he bore his sufferings heroically, as is testified by the records in his *Journal de Voyage*.

Page after page here is taken up by individual cases of suicide, of those who from one cause and another have taken refuge in death; some more or less publicly, some with more or less solemn display. Other pages are given to descriptions of the self-destruction of whole cities

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[1] This whole passage, from "Our soul could not attain," is taken from Seneca, *De Tranquillitate Vitæ*, XV. The opinion of Plato is found in *Io* and that of Aristotle in *Problems*, 30.

[2] See Plato, *Timæus*.

[3] *Coustume*.

when besieged. Still other pages note deaths sought from eagerness for the life to come.

The last words are, "Physical pain and the fear of a worse death seem to me the most excusable incitements."

In the literary style of this Essay is evident a method that M. Villey thus describes (*Les Sources*, etc., II, 44):

"Montaigne is wont to use the form of ending off what he is saying with phrases or eloquent expressions gathered here or there from the works of the ancients, mingling them with illustrative examples which sometimes he has taken the trouble to collect himself, but which sometimes he has found brought together by his forerunners. The citations that are in verse retain their Latin form; they especially please him because, as he says (in Book I, chapter 26): 'Just as the voice, when confined within the narrow channel of a trumpet, comes forth more penetratingly and more strongly, so it seems to me that the phrase compressed within the metrical forms of verse darts forth with more sudden force, and strikes with a livelier impact!'

"Those that are in prose he generally translates, or he imitates them; almost all of them he borrows from Seneca, because the style of Seneca is more terse and impressive than any other. Transitions, of course, lead from one citation to another, bind them together, smelt them, so to speak, into the substance of the topic; but Montaigne makes these transitions of little length because they enfeeble and lessen the force of the citation."

In this Essay there are nearly forty "stories"! It is one of the Essays that offended Pascal; and it is one of the boldest, which fact explains the precautions of the opening.

IF to philosophise be to doubt, as they say, then with stronger reason to treat matters ignorantly and fancifully,[1] as I do, must be to doubt. For it belongs to scholars to examine and discuss, and to the rightful judge[2] to determine. My rightful judge is the authority of the divine will, which rules us without gainsaying, and which has its place above these human and vain disputations.

Philip having entered the Peloponnesus with an armed force, some one said to Damidas that the Lacedæmonians would have much to suffer if they did not obtain his favour. "O dullard," he replied, "what can those suffer who fear not death?"[3] Agis was asked how a man could live free. "By making light of dying," he said.[4] These sayings, and

[1] *Niaiser et fantastiquer.*

[2] *Au cathedrant.*

[3] See Plutarch, *Apothegms of the Lacedæmonians.*

[4] See *Ibid.*

a thousand similar ones that we find on this subject, evidently signify something beyond the mere waiting patiently for death to come to us. For there are in life many worse casualties than death. Witness the Lacedæmonian child captured by Antigonus, and sold as a slave, who, being constrained by his master to perform some menial service, "You shall see," he said, "whom you have bought; it would shame me to serve, having liberty so close at hand"; and so saying, he threw himself from the top of the house.[1] Antipater harshly threatening the Lacedæmonians to make them submit to a demand of his, "If you threaten us with worse than death," they replied, "we shall rather die." [2] (*c*) And to Philip, who had written to them that he would hinder all their undertakings, "What! you will hinder us also from dying?" [3] (*a*) It is as is said, that the wise man lives as long as he should, not as long as he can; [4] and that the kindest gift that Nature has given us, and that deprives us of all excuse for complaining of our condition, is the having left us the means of exit.[5] She has ordained but one entrance into life and a hundred thousand ways out.[6] (*b*) We may lack land to live on, but land to die on we can never lack, as Boiocatus answered the Romans.[7] (*a*) Why do you complain of this world? It does not hold you fast; if you live in sorrow, your cowardice is to blame; to die needs only the desire.[8]

> Ubique mors est; optime hoc cavit Deus,
> Eripere vitam nemo non homini potest;
> At nemo mortem; mille ad hanc aditus patent.[9]

And this is not the remedy for a single sickness; death is the

[1] See Plutarch, *Apothegms of the Lacedæmonians.*
[2] See *Ibid.*
[3] See Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, V, 14.
[4] See Seneca, *Epistle* 70.
[5] *La clef des champs.* See *Ibid.*
[6] See *Ibid.*
[7] See Tacitus, *Annals*, XIII, 56.
[8] See Seneca, *Epistle* 70.
[9] Death is everywhere; this the god benevolently makes certain. Any one can take life from a man, but no one death; a thousand avenues are open to that. — Seneca, *Thebaïs* (*Phœnissæ*), I, 1, 151.

remedy for all ills.[1] It is a very certain haven, which is never to be feared and often to be sought. It all comes to the same thing, whether a man bring his end upon himself, or whether he suffer it; whether he run to meet his day, or whether he await it;[2] whencesoever it may come, it is always his;[3] at whatever place the thread breaks, it is all broken off, it is the last of the spindleful.[4] The most willing death is the noblest.[5] Life depends on the will of another, death on our own. In nothing should we so much adjust ourselves to our inclinations as in this. Reputation has nothing to do with such an undertaking; it is folly to have regard for it.[6] To live is slavery if liberty to die is lacking.[7] The common course of cure is carried on at the expense of life; they cut us, they cauterise us, they lop off our limbs, they deprive us of nourishment and blood; one step further, and behold, we are cured altogether. Why is not the vein of the throat as much at our command as that of the arm? For the strongest diseases, the strongest remedies. Servius the grammarian, having the gout, found for it no better remedy than to apply poison to his legs and kill them;[8] (*c*) they might be as gouty as they chose, provided they had no feeling. (*a*) God gives us leave enough to depart when he puts us in such a condition that life is worse than death to us.

(*c*) It is weakness to yield to ills, but it is madness to nourish them.[9] The Stoics say that, for the wise man, it is living in conformity with nature to depart from life, even though he be at the height of good fortune, if he does it opportunely; and, for the fool, to cling to his life, although he is in miserable plight, provided that he has the greater part

[1] See Seneca, *Epistle* 78.
[2] See *Epistle* 70.
[3] See *Epistle* 69.
[4] See *Epistle* 77. Cf. Book I, chap. 20: *Où que votre vie finisse, elle y est toute.*
[5] See *Epistle* 69. *Bella res est mori sua morte.*
[6] See *Epistle* 70.
[7] See *Epistle* 77.
[8] See Suetonius, *Lives of Eminent Grammarians.* In the editions of 1580 to 1588, this sentence follows: *et vescut depuis ayant cette partie du corps morte.*
[9] See Seneca, *Epistle* 58.

of those things which they say are according to nature.[1] As I do not break the laws against thieves when I take what is my own and rob my own purse, or those against incendiaries, when I burn my own wood, in like manner, I am not subject, for having taken my own life, to the laws against murder. Hegesias said that, as the conditions of life depend upon our choice, so should the conditions of death.[2] And Diogenes, meeting the philosopher Speusippus who, long suffering with dropsy, had himself carried in a litter, and who called out to him, "Good wishes, Diogenes!" — "No wishes for you," he replied, "who, being in such a state, endure life." In truth, some time afterward, Speusippus killed himself, being weary of such a painful condition of life.[3] (*a*) But this does not pass uncontradicted; for many maintain that we can not quit this garrison of the world without the express command of him who stationed us in it; and that it is for God, who has sent us here, not for ourselves alone, but rather for his glory and the service of others, to give us leave to depart when it may please him, not for us to take it;[4] (*c*) that we are not born for ourselves, but also for our country; the laws require from us an accounting of ourselves in their own interest; and have an action for homicide against us; (*a*) otherwise we are punished in the other world as deserters from our post.

> Proxima deinde tenent mœsti loca, qui sibi lætum
> Insontes peperere manu, lucemque perosi
> Projecere animas.[5]

There is much more steadfastness in wearing away the chain that holds us than in breaking it, and more proof of firmness in Regulus than in Cato. It is lack of discretion and of patience that hastens our steps. No chance events can make

[1] See Cicero, *De Fin.*, III, 18; opinions attributed to Cato of Utica.

[2] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Aristippus.*

[3] See Idem, *Life of Speusippus.*

[4] See St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, I, 22, and Vivès's *Commentary* thereon.

[5] The next region is inhabited by those melancholy beings who, though innocent, have given themselves death by their own hands, and hating the light of day, have rejected their souls. — Virgil, *Æneid*, VI, 434.

live courage turn her back; she seeks misfortune and pain as her sustenance. The menaces of tyrants, racks, and executioners animate and vivify her;

Duris ut ilex tonsa bipennibus
Nigræ feraci frondis in Algido,
Per damna, per cædes, ab ipso
Ducit opes animumque ferro.[1]

And, as this other says, —

Non est, ut putas, virtus, pater,
Timere vitam, sed malis ingentibus
Obstare, nec se vertere ac retro dare.[2]

Rebus in adversis facile est contemnere mortem:
Fortius ille facit qui miser esse potest.[3]

It is the part of cowardice, not of courage, to go and crouch in a hole under a massive tomb, to avoid the blows of fortune. She [4] does not break off her journey and her course, however violent the storm may be.

Si fractus illabatur orbis,
Impavidam ferient ruinæ.[5]

Most frequently the avoidance of other mishaps drives us into this one; truly, sometimes the avoidance of death causes us to rush upon it: —

(*c*) Hic, rogo, non furor est, ne moriare, mori? [6]

[1] As the oak in the dark forests on Algidus, lopped by pitiless axes, derives power and vigour from its losses, from its wounds, from the steel itself. — Horace, *Odes*, IV, 4.57.

[2] Valour consists not, my father, as you believe, in fearing life, but in withstanding great troubles, not avoiding them and turning one's back on them. — Seneca, *Thebaïs*, I, 190.

[3] In adverse days it is easy to despise death; more courageous is he who can be wretched. — Martial, XI, 56.15.

[4] That is, courage.

[5] Though the shattered heavens crumble, the ruins will strike her [courage] unterrified. — Horace, *Odes*, III, 3.7. Montaigne changed *impavidum* to *impavidam*, thereby changing the reference from the Sage to Virtue.

[6] Is not this, I ask, madness, to die for fear of dying? — Martial, II, 80.2.

(*a*) like those who, from fear of the precipice throw themselves into it.

Multos in summa pericula misit
Venturi timor ipse mali; fortissimus ille est,
Qui promptus metuenda pati, si cominus instent,
Et differre potest.[1]

Usque adeo, mortis formidine, vitæ
Percipit humanos odium, lucisque videndæ,
Ut sibi consciscant mærenti pectore letum,
Obliti fontem curarum hunc esse timorem.[2]

(*c*) Plato, in his Laws, decrees ignominious burial for him who has deprived his nearest and best friend — namely himself — of life and of what destiny has in store, when not constrained by public sentence, or by some sad and inevitable accident of fortune, or by intolerable disgrace, but by the cowardice and weakness of a shrinking soul.[3] (*a*) And the opinion that despises our life — that is ridiculous. For, when all is said, it is our existence, it is our all. Things which have a nobler and ampler existence may decry ours; but it is against nature that we should despise ourselves and set ourselves at naught; it is a disease peculiar to man, and found in no other creature, to hate and disdain himself. It is a like folly, that we desire to be other than we are. The result of such a desire does not reach us, inasmuch as it contradicts itself and is its own hindrance. He who desires to be changed from man to angel in no wise advantages himself; (*c*) he would be not a whit the better for it. For when he no longer exists, who will perceive and be rejoiced by that promotion for him?

[1] Many have been driven into the greatest peril from the very fear of coming ills; most courageous is he who, if they be near at hand, resolutely meets things to be feared, and is able to disperse them. — Lucan, VII, 104.

[2] From the dread of death, such a hatred of life and of the sight of daylight seizes upon mortals, that with mournful heart they kill themselves, forgetting that this fear is the source of their uneasiness. — Lucretius, III, 79.

[3] See Plato, *Laws*, book IX.

(*b*) Debet enim, misere cui forte ægreque futurum est,
Ipse quoque esse in eo tum tempore cum male possit
Accidere.[1]

(*a*) The security, the insensibility, the impassibility, the absence of the ills of this life, which we purchase at the price of death, bring us no advantage. To no purpose does he avoid war who can not enjoy peace; and to no purpose does he fly from toil who has not the means of relishing repose.

Among those who take the first-mentioned view,[2] there has been much uncertainty on this point: what occasions are of sufficient weight to justify man in the decision of killing himself? They call this εὔλογον ἐξαγωγήν.[3] For, although they say that men must often die for trivial causes, since those that detain us in life are not very powerful,[4] yet there must be some measure in this. There have been fantastic and unreasonable humours which have driven, not single individuals only, but communities, to make way with themselves. I have already alleged some examples of this; [5] and we also read of the Milesian virgins that, in pursuance of a mad agreement, they hanged themselves one after another, until the magistrate took heed to it, ordering that those who should be found thus hanged should be dragged through the city, naked, by the rope.[6] When Threicion exhorts Cleomenes to kill himself on account of the bad state of his affairs, and, since he had shunned the most honourable death in the battle he had just lost, to accept this other kind which ranks next to that in honour, and not permit the victor to make him endure either a shameful death or a shameful life, Cleomenes, with the courage of a Lacedæmonian and a Stoic, refused that advice as cowardly and weak. "It is a remedy," he said, "which can never be lacking to me, and which should not be used while there remains one

[1] For he whom evil is to befall must still exist at that time, when haply there is to be misery and suffering for him. — Lucretius, III, 862.

[2] That is, who recommend suicide.

[3] A reasonable exit. — Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Zeno*.

[4] See Seneca, *Epistle* 77.

[5] See Book I, chap. 14 (Vol. I, p. 67).

[6] See Plutarch, *Of the virtuous deeds of women*. Cf. Erasmus, *Stultitiæ Laus*.

inch of hope"; adding that to live is sometimes firmness and valour; that he desires that even his death may be of service to his country and desires to make it an act of honour and desert. Threicion thought himself in the right, and killed himself. Cleomenes afterward did the same; but not until he had experienced the lowest point of fortune.[1] All possible misfortunes are not of so much weight that a man should wish to die to avoid them. Moreover, there being so many sudden changes in human affairs, it is difficult to judge at what point we are really at the end of our hope.

(*b*) Sperat et in sæva victus gladiator arena,
Sit licet infesto pollice turba minax.[2]

(*a*) All things, according to an ancient saying, may justly be hoped for by a man as long as he lives. "True," rejoins Seneca, "but why should I have this in my head: that fortune is all-powerful regarding him who is living, rather than this: that fortune is powerless regarding him who is ready to die?"[3] We find Josephus involved in a peril so manifest and near at hand, a whole people having risen against him, that in reason he had no refuge; none the less, though advised, as he says, by one of his friends at this crisis, to make way with himself, it was well for him that he still persisted in hoping: for, beyond all human foresight, fortune turned aside the disaster in such a way that he found himself delivered from it without any mishap.[4] And Cassius and Brutus, on the contrary, destroyed the last remnants of Roman freedom, of which they were the protectors, by the headlong haste and rashness with which they killed themselves before the due time and occasion.

(*c*) In the battle of Serisolles,[5] Monsieur d'Anguien tried twice to run his sword into his throat, despairing of the result of the battle, which was turning ill at the spot where he was; and by his precipitation was like to have deprived him-

[1] See Plutarch, *Lives of Agis and Cleomenes*.

[2] The conquered gladiator in the savage arena has hopes, despite the hostile thumbs of the menacing crowd. — Attributed to Pentadius, in Justus Lipsius, *Saturnalium Sermonum Libri*.

[3] See Seneca, *Epistle* 70.

[4] See Josephus, *De Vita Sua*, 28.

[5] April 14, 1544.

self of the enjoyment of so fine a victory.[1] (*c*) I have seen a hundred hares save themselves in the very teeth of the hounds. *Aliquis carnifici suo superstes fuit.*[2]

> Multa dies variusque labor mutabilis ævi
> Rettulit in melius; multos alterna revisens
> Lusit, et in solido rursus fortuna locavit.[3]

(*a*) Pliny says that there are only three kinds of malady to avoid which one may have the right to kill one's self: the most painful of all is the stone in the bladder, when the urine is checked.[4] (*c*) Seneca, those only which deranged for a long time the functions of the mind.[5] (*a*) There are those who believe that, to avoid a worse death, they may take their life when they please. (*c*) Democritus, leader of the Ætolians, when taken to Rome a prisoner, found a means to escape by night. But, being pursued by his guards, rather than allow himself to be retaken, he ran his sword through his body.[6] Antinous and Theodotus, their city in Epirus being reduced to extremity by the Romans, advised the people to kill themselves, one and all; but the counsel rather to surrender having prevailed, they too went forth to seek death, throwing themselves upon the foe, to strike, not to protect themselves.[7] The island of Goza being violently entered by the Turks some years ago, a Sicilian who had two beautiful daughters of marriageable age killed them with his own hand, and afterward their mother, who came running to them as they died. This done, going into a street with a cross-bow and a harquebus, with two shots he killed the first two Turks who approached his door; and then, tak-

[1] This sentence is not in the *Édition Municipale;* it was added in 1595.

[2] There was a man who survived his executioner. — Seneca, *Epistle* 13.11.

[3] Many things have been improved by time and the varying travail of the years; revisiting them, fortune has made sport of many men, again placing them on solid ground. — Virgil, *Æneid,* XI, 425.

[4] See Pliny, *Natural History,* XXV, 3. Editions of 1580 to 1588 add: *la seconde, la douleur d'estomach; la tierce, la douleur de teste.*

[5] See Seneca, *Epistle* 58.36.

[6] See Livy, XXXVII, 46.

[7] See Idem, XLV, 26.

ing his sword in his hand, rushed madly among them, when he was instantly surrounded and cut to pieces, thus saving himself from slavery, after he had rescued his children from it.[1] (*a*) The Jewish women, after they had had their children circumcised, precipitately killed themselves with them, flying from the cruelty of Antiochus.[2] I have been told that, a prisoner of good family being in one of our prisons, his kindred, being warned that he would surely be condemned, to avert the disgrace of such a death, secretly induced[3] a priest to tell him that the sovereign aid toward his deliverance was to commend himself to some saint, under such and such a vow, and to pass eight days without taking any sustenance, however faint and weak he might feel. He believed this, and by that means unwittingly rid himself of his life and of the danger. Scribonia, advising Libo, her nephew, to kill himself rather than to await the hand of justice, told him that it was really doing another man's work, to preserve his life in order to give it over to the hands of those who would come to take it two or three days later; and that it was to serve his enemies, to save his blood for them to glut themselves on it.[4]

We read in the Bible that Nicanor, the assailant of the law of God, having sent his satellites to seize the good old Rasias, surnamed in honour of his virtue the Father of the Jews, when that worthy man saw nothing but disorder, — his gate burned and his enemies ready to seize him, — choosing to die nobly rather than to fall into the hands of the miscreants to be cruelly dealt with, to the dishonour of his rank, he stabbed himself with his sword; but the blow, because of his haste, not reaching home, he ran and threw himself from the top of the wall into the midst of the soldiery; and they drawing apart and giving place, he pitched directly on his head. Notwithstanding this, finding that there was still some life left in him, he rekindled his courage, and rising to his feet, all bleeding and covered with wounds,

[1] See G. Paradin, *Histoire de nostre Temps*, etc.; Villey, *Livres de l'Histoire Moderne, etc.*, pp. 139, 140.

[2] See Josephus, *History of the Maccabees.*

[3] *Aposterent.*

[4] *Pour leur en faire curée.* See Seneca, *Epistle* 70.

breaking through the throng, he made his way to a certain craggy precipitous cliff, where, unable to do more, he seized his entrails with both hands (*c*) through one of his wounds, (*a*) tearing and rending them, and threw them among his pursuers, calling down upon them and affirming the divine vengeance.[1]

Of the outrages that are inflicted upon the conscience, the one to be most carefully avoided, in my opinion, is the violation of the chastity of women, inasmuch as there is by nature some bodily pleasure intermixed with it; and for this reason the repugnance can not in this be complete, and it seems that with the compulsion may be intermixed some consent. Pelagia and Sophronia, both canonised — the one threw herself into the river with her mother and sisters to escape the compulsion of certain soldiers, and the other likewise killed herself to escape the compulsion of the Emperor Maxentius.[2] (*c*) Ecclesiastical history holds in veneration several like examples of devout persons who appealed to death as a protection against the outrages that tyrants prepared against their conscience. (*a*) It will, peradventure, be creditable to us, in ages to come, that a learned author of these days, especially as he was a Parisian, did his utmost to persuade the ladies of our epoch to follow almost any other course rather than to adopt so shocking a counsel of despair. I much regret that he had not heard — that he might include it in his arguments — of the pleasant remark, which I learned at Toulouse, of a peasant woman who had passed through the hands of several soldiers: "God be praised," she said, "that at least once in my life I have been sullied without sinning!" In truth, such barbarities are unworthy of our French amenity. Thank God, our air has been thoroughly purged of them since that pleasant caution: it is enough that they say "Nay, nay!" while yielding, according to the rule of our excellent Marot.[3]

History is crowded with the persons who have exchanged a life of dismay for death. (*b*) Lucius Aruntius killed himself, he said, to escape from both the future and the past.[4]

[1] See II *Maccabees* (Apocrypha), XIV, 37–46.
[2] See *Commentary* of Vivès on St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, I, 26.
[3] In the epigram, *De Oui et Nenny*.
[4] See Tacitus, *Annals*, VI, 48.

(*c*) Granius Silvanus and Statius Proximus, after being pardoned by Nero, killed themselves, either to avoid living by the favour of so wicked a man, or to avoid the need another time of a second pardon, considering his readiness to suspect and accuse men of worth.[1] Spargapises, son of Queen Tomiris, and a prisoner of war of Cyrus, made use of the first favour shown him by Cyrus, — the leaving him unfettered, — to kill himself; having sought no other benefit from his liberty than to avenge upon himself the disgrace of his capture.[2] Boges, Governor in Eion under King Xerxes, being besieged by the army of the Athenians under the command of Cimon, refused the proposal to return in safety to Asia with all his substance, being unable to endure surviving the loss of what his master had entrusted to his keeping; and, after he had defended his city to the last extremity, there being nothing left to eat, he first threw into the river Strymon all the gold and every thing which it seemed to him that the enemy could make booty of; and then, having ordered a great pile to be kindled and his wives', children's, concubines', and servants' throats to be cut, he threw them into the fire, and then himself.[3] Ninachetuen, an Indian lord, having got wind of the intention of the Portuguese viceroy to dispossess him, without any visible cause, from his high office in Malacca, to give it to the King of Campar, privately formed this resolution: he caused a staging to be built, longer than broad, supported on columns, royally carpeted, and bedecked with flowers and perfumes in abundance; and then, having arrayed himself in a robe of cloth of gold loaded with precious stones of great value, he went out into the street and ascended the steps of the staging, in one corner of which a pile of aromatic woods was burning. All the people flocked to see for what end these unwonted preparations were made. Ninachetuen, with a bold and displeased bearing, set forth the indebtedness of the Portuguese nation to him: how loyally lavish he had been in his high office; that having so often testified in behalf of another, arms in hand, that honour was much dearer to him

[1] Tacitus, *Annals*, XV, 71.
[2] See Herodotus, I, 213.
[3] See Herodotus, VII, 107; Plutarch, *Life of Cimon*.

than life, he was not the man to abandon the care of it in his own behalf; that, since fortune denied him all means of resisting the affront it was proposed to put upon him, his heart bade him at least to free himself from perception of it, and not to serve for a laughing-stock to the people and for triumph to men who were worth less than he. So saying, he cast himself into the flames.[1] (*b*) Sextilia, wife of Scaurus, and Paxea, wife of Labeo, to encourage their husbands to escape from the perils that were hanging over them, in which they had no share save by right of conjugal affection, willingly forfeited life, to be examples and companions to them in their extreme need.[2] What they did for their husbands Cocceius Nerva did for his country, less usefully, but with equal affection. That great jurist, flourishing in health, in riches, in reputation, and in influence with the emperor, had no other reason to kill himself than community of suffering with the wretched state of the public affairs of Rome.[3] Nothing can add to the fineness of feeling of the death of the wife of that Fulvius who was in frequent intercourse with Augustus. Augustus, having discovered that he had divulged an important secret which he had entrusted to him, received him coldly one morning when he came to visit him. He returned to his house, full of despair, and ruefully told his wife that, having fallen into this misfortune, he had resolved to kill himself. She outspokenly replied: "You will do but what is wise, seeing that, having often enough experienced the incontinence of my tongue, you have not been on your guard against it. But wait, that I may kill myself first." And without further parley she ran herself through the body with a sword.[4] (*c*) Vibius Virius, despairing of the preservation of his city,[5] which was besieged by the Romans, and of their mercy, declared in the last deliberation of their [6] Senate that the noblest course was to escape from fortune by their own hands. The enemy would hold them in honour,

[1] See Goulard, *Histoire du Portugal*, IX, 27.
[2] See Tacitus, *Annals*, VI, 29.
[3] See *Ibid.*, 26.
[4] See Plutarch, *Of talking overmuch.*
[5] Capua.
[6] That is, the Capuan.

and Hannibal would perceive what loyal friends he had abandoned. He invited those who were of his mind to partake of a good supper that was prepared at his house, where, after enjoying the good cheer, they would drink together what should be offered them: "A beverage which will deliver our bodies from torture, our souls from insult, our eyes and our ears from the consciousness of the many hateful wrongs which the vanquished have to suffer from victors most cruel and angered. I have given orders," he said, "that there shall be persons ready to throw us on a funeral pile before my door, when we have expired." Many approved his high resolution, but few imitated him. Twenty-seven senators followed him, and having tried to drown in wine that painful thought, ended their repast with the mortal potion brought to them; and embracing one another, after having deplored in common the ill-fortune of their country, some withdrew to their own houses, and others remained to be thrown with Virius into the flames. And they were all so long in dying, the fumes of the wine having filled their veins and retarding the effect of the poison, that some were within an hour of seeing the enemy in Capua, which was carried by storm next day, and of incurring the suffering that they had fled from at such cost.[1] Taurea Jubellius, another citizen of that city, when the Consul Fulvius returned from the shameful slaughter that he had made of two hundred and twenty-five senators, called to him haughtily by his name, and having stopped him, said: "Command that I too be murdered after all those others, so that you may boast of having killed a much more valiant man than yourself." Fulvius making no account of him, as insane (and, too, he had just received letters from Rome adverse to the inhumanity of what he had done, which bound his hands), Jubellius continued: "Since my country is captured, my friends dead, and having with my own hands slain my wife and children, to deliver them from the desolation of this downfall, it is forbidden me to die by the same death with my fellow citizens; let me borrow from courage vengeance on this hateful life." And, drawing a blade that he had hidden, he thrust it into his breast, falling headlong, dying, at the

[1] See Livy, XXVI, 13–15.

consul's feet.[1] (*b*) Alexander was besieging a city in the Indies; those within the walls, finding themselves hard pressed, sturdily resolved to deprive him of the pleasure of the victory; and setting fire to their city, all together burned themselves with it, in despite of his humanity. A novel kind of warfare was seen: the enemy fought to save them, they to destroy themselves; and to ensure their death, they did every thing that men do to ensure their lives.[2]

(*c*) Astapa, a city in Spain, finding itself weak in walls and defences to withstand the Romans, the inhabitants made a pile of their valuables and household stuff in the public square; and having placed their wives and children on the top of the heap, and having surrounded it with wood and materials that would take fire instantly, and left fifty of their young men to execute their determination, they made a sally in which, in accordance with their vow, for lack of being able to conquer, they caused themselves all to be killed. The fifty, after having massacred every living soul scattered through the town, and set fire to that heap, threw themselves also upon it, ending their noble-hearted liberty in a state without feeling rather than grievous and shameful, and showing their enemies that, had fortune so willed, they would have had the spirit to snatch the victory from them, as they had had to make it vain and ghastly, aye, and fatal to those who, lured by the gleam of the gold melting in the flame, having drawn near to it in large numbers, were suffocated and burned by it, being prevented from turning back by the crowd that followed them.[3] The Abideans, hard pressed by Philip, formed the same resolution. But, being short of time, the king, who was horrified in seeing the reckless haste of their doings, having seized upon the treasures and household articles which they were destroying either by fire or in the sea,[4] withdrew his troops and granted them

[1] See Livy, XXVI, 15. Montaigne does not follow his authority closely.

[2] See Quintus Curtius, IX, 4. M. Villey, who discovered this passage in Quintus Curtius, points out that the reference to Diodorus Siculus, hitherto generally adopted by commentators, is not satisfactory.

[3] See Livy, XXVIII, 22, 23.

[4] *Qu'ils avoient diversement condamnez au feu et au naufrage.*

three days to kill themselves in a more orderly fashion, which days they filled with bloodshed and murder, exceeding the cruelty of any foe; and not a single person fled who might have done so.[1]

There are numberless examples of like popular decisions, which seem the more severe in proportion as the result is more nearly universal. They are less so than when formed separately. That which reasoning would not do in each individual, it does in the mass, the ardour of fellowship overpowering private judgement. (*b*) In the time of Tiberius, those condemned persons who awaited execution lost their property and were deprived of sepulture; those who anticipated it by killing themselves were buried and might make a will.[2]

(*a*) But death is sometimes, too, desired in the hope of a greater good. "I desire," says St. Paul, "to be released from life in order to be with Jesus Christ";[3] and, "who shall loose me from these bonds?"[4] Cleombrotus Ambraciota, having read the *Phædo* of Plato, felt so great a craving for the life to come that, without other cause, he threw himself into the sea.[5] (*c*) Whence it appears how unfitly we give the name of despair to that voluntary departure from life to which the eagerness of hope often carries us, and often, too, a calm and deliberate inclination of the judgement. (*a*) Jacques du Chastel, Bishop of Soissons, in the expedition that St. Louis made beyond the seas, seeing the king and the whole army on the point of returning to France, leaving religious matters unfinished, resolved rather to go to Paradise. And having bade his friends adieu, he charged alone, before the eyes of all, into the enemy's army, where he was cut to pieces.[6] (*c*) In a certain kingdom of those newly dis-

[1] *Qui eut pouvoir sur soi.* See Livy, XXXI, 18.

[2] See Tacitus, *Annals*, VI, 29.

[3] *Philippians*, I, 23. In the Vulgate the passage reads: "Desiderium habens dissolvi, et esse cum Christo"; in the Authorised Version, "having a desire to depart and be with Christ."

[4] *Romans*, VII, 24. Vulgate: "Quis me liberabit de corporis mortis hujus?" Authorised Version: "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

[5] See Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, I, 34.

[6] See Prince de Joinville, *Mémoires*, LI.

covered countries, on the day of a solemn procession, when the idol they worship is drawn in public on a car of wonderful size, besides many persons who are seen cutting off bits of their living flesh to present to it, many others prostrate themselves on the road, who are ground and crushed under the wheels, in order thus to acquire, after their death, veneration for sanctity, which is rendered to them.[1] The death of this bishop, arms in hand, has more nobility and less physical sensation, the ardour of combat doing away in part with that.[2]

(*a*) There are governments which have undertaken to regulate the propriety and fitness of voluntary death. In our Marseilles there was kept in former times, at public cost, poison prepared from hemlock for those who wished to shorten their days, having first avowed to the Six Hundred, which was their Senate, the reasons for their action; and it was not allowable otherwise than by permission of the magistrate, and for legitimate reasons, to lay hand upon oneself.[3] This law existed also elsewhere.

Sextus Pompeius, on his way to Asia, touched at the island of Cea in Negropontis. It chanced while he was there, as we learn from one of those who were with him, that a woman of great authority, having explained to her fellow citizens why she had determined to end her life, invited Pompeius to be present at her death, to make it more honourable; which he was; and having long vainly endeavoured by the power of eloquence, which was wonderfully at his service, and of persuasion, to turn her from her purpose, at last consented that she should do her will. She had passed ninety years in a very fortunate condition of mind and body; but now, lying on her bed, which was more richly adorned than usual, and leaning on her elbow, "The gods, O Sextus Pompeius," she said, "and rather those I leave than those I go to seek, are grateful to you for that you have not disdained to be both a counsellor of my life and a witness of my death. For my part, having always beheld the favourable face of fortune, lest too great love of life should cause me to

[1] See G. de Mendoza, *History of the Kingdom of China.*

[2] *En amusant une partie.*

[3] See Valerius Maximus, II, 6, 7.

see another aspect of it, I purpose by a happy ending to dismiss the remnant of my soul, leaving behind me two daughters and a legion of nephews." This said, having exhorted and encouraged her family to live in unity and concord, having divided her property among them and commended the household gods to the care of her eldest daughter, she took with a steady hand the cup in which was the poison; and having made her vows to Mercury and prayed him to conduct her to some happy abode in the other world, she quickly swallowed that mortal draught. Now she informs the company of the progress of its operation, and how the parts of her body feel themselves becoming cold one after another; until, having said at the last that it had reached the heart and the bowels, she called her daughters to perform for her the last duties and to close her eyes.[1] Pliny narrates concerning a certain hyperborean nation that, on account of the mild temperature of the air, the lives of the people there commonly end only by their own will; but that, being weary and sated with living, they are accustomed, after long years, having made good cheer, to throw themselves into the sea from the top of a certain cliff appointed for that purpose.[2] (*b*) Unbearable physical pain and the fear of a worse death seem to me the most excusable incitements.

CHAPTER IV

BUSINESS TO-MORROW

This little Essay is the simple jotting down of the reflections that came to Montaigne on reading in Plutarch (in the treatise, *Of Curiosity*) two stories, one of a certain Rusticus who, while listening to a public speech that Plutarch was making, received a missive from the emperor, which, out of courtesy to the speaker, he delayed to open; and the other of a tyrant of Thebes who, receiving a communication which would have warned him of plots against him, laid it carelessly aside, being at supper, saying, "Business to-morrow," a phrase "which became a proverb in Greece" — and which gives the title to our Essay.

[1] See Valerius Maximus, II, 6, *ext.* 8.
[2] See Pliny, *Natural History*, IV, 12.

Montaigne thinks by no means that "business to-morrow" is good counsel; for a man in public office it is inexcusable not to be ready to interrupt his dinner, or even his sleep.

The last sentence of the Essay is the wisest one in it; and the first page — a eulogy of Amyot, the translator of Plutarch — the most interesting page.

The paragraph beginning "I have never opened [a letter]" is a curious indication of the possible *doings* of those days.

I GIVE, and, it seems to me, with good reason, the palm to Jacques Amyot over all our French authors, not only for simplicity and purity of language, wherein he surpasses all others, nor for his persistence in so prolonged a task, nor for the depth of his learning, which has made him able to interpret so happily an author so pathless and sure-footed [1] (for, say what you please, I know no Greek, but I find everywhere in his translation a significance so fine, so well combined and maintained throughout, that either he has certainly grasped the author's true thought, or having by long study rooted vividly in his mind a general idea of Plutarch's mind, he has at all events attributed to him nothing that belies or contradicts him); but above all I am grateful to him for having culled out and chosen a book so worthy and so opportune, to make a present of it to his country. We ignoramuses had been lost if that book had not lifted us out of the mire; thanks to it, we dare now to speak and write; the ladies lord it over the schoolmasters; it is our breviary. If this good man should live, I point out to him Xenophon to do as much by:[2] it is an easier task and one better fitted to his old age; and then, I know not why, it seems to me that, although he gets clear quickly and completely from a difficult passage, nevertheless his style is more at home [3] when it is not constrained and flows leisurely along. I was but now reading the passage where Plutarch, speaking of himself, says that Rusticus, being present at a declamation of his at Rome, received a missive from the emperor, and delayed opening it until all was done; for which, he says, the whole audience peculiarly

[1] *Epineux et ferré.*

[2] At this time there was no French translation of the complete works of Xenophon.

[3] *Chez soi.*

praised the composure of this personage.[1] Truly, as he was treating of curiosity, and of that passion, eager and greedy for news, that makes us so inconsiderately and impatiently drop every thing to talk to a newcomer, and throw aside all respect and decorum to open instantly, wherever we may be, the letters that are brought us, he had reason to praise the composure of Rusticus; and might have added a word of praise of his civility and courtesy in wishing not to interrupt the course of the declamation. But I am in doubt whether he can be praised for discretion, since, receiving letters unexpectedly, especially from an emperor, it might well happen that to defer reading them would cause great harm.

The opposite vice to curiosity is indifference, (*b*) to which I am evidently inclined by temperament, and (*a*) which I have seen so extreme in many men, that three or four days afterward there would be found in their pockets, still sealed, letters that had been sent to them. (*b*) I never open any, not only of those that have been entrusted to me, but also of those that chance causes to fall into my hands; and I feel remorse if my eyes heedlessly steal some knowledge of important letters that a great man is reading when I am at his side. Never was there a man less inquisitive about the affairs of others, or who pried less into them. (*a*) In the time of our fathers Monsieur de Boutières almost lost Turin because, being at supper with pleasant company, he put off reading a warning that was brought him of treachery that was being contrived against that city, where he was in command; and I am informed by this same Plutarch that Julius Cæsar would have been saved if, on his way to the Senate the day when he was killed by the conspirators, he had read a letter that was handed him.[2] And he tells also this story of Archias, Tyrant of Thebes, that on the evening before the execution of the plot formed by Pelopidas to kill him in order to give back liberty to his country, another Archias, an Athenian, wrote to him what was in store for him, point by point; and this missive being given to him while he was at supper, he delayed opening it, saying this, which afterward became a proverb in Greece: "Business to-morrow."[3]

[1] See Plutarch, *Of Curiosity*. [2] See Plutarch, *Life of Cæsar*.
[3] See Plutarch, *Of the Familiar Demon of Socrates*.

A wise man may, in my opinion, in the interest of others, — as, for instance, like Rusticus, in order not to disturb uncivilly those whom he is with, or not to break off another affair of importance, — postpone listening to new matters; but in his own personal interest or pleasure, especially if he be a man holding public office, not to break off his dinner, or even his sleep, is inexcusable. And in ancient times, at Rome, the most honourable place at the table was called the consular seat, because it was freer and more accessible to those who might come on a sudden to have speech with him who was seated there.[1] Which witnesses that, because they were at table, they did not desist from managing other affairs and occurrences. But when all is said, it is difficult in human actions to make, by exercise of the reason, so complete a rule that chance will not maintain her rights in them.

CHAPTER V

OF THE CONSCIENCE

This Essay is, very simply, a study (in stories) of the external manifestations of men's consciences. Like the preceding one, its subject is derived from the *Œuvres morales* (Amyot's translation) of Plutarch. There are five or six borrowings, almost all of which come from the treatise entitled *Of the delays of divine justice.* The Essay opens with an amusing description of the extreme timidity of "a gentleman of agreeable demeanour," whom Montaigne and his brother met one day when travelling. In this passage occurs the mention (for which Montaigne has been absurdly criticised) of the death of his Italian page, an incident interestingly illustrative of the conditions of that day.

By far the most interesting bit is that beginning, "It is a dangerous invention" (that of instruments of torture).

AS my brother, the Sieur de la Brousse, and I were journeying once during our civil war, we met a gentleman of agreeable demeanour; he was of the party opposed to ours, but I knew nothing of that, for he pretended otherwise; and the worst of such wars is that the cards are so mixed, your enemy being distinguished

[1] See Plutarch, *Table-Talk.* Editions of 1580 to 1588 add: *ou pour luy donner quelque avertissement à l'oreille.*

from you by no apparent sign, either of language or of bearing, brought up under the same laws and customs and the same conditions of life, that it is difficult to avoid confusion and disorder. This made me myself dread meeting our troops in some place where I might not be recognised and might have difficulty in making myself known, and, perchance, worse than that. (*b*) As it happened to me at another time; for through being mistaken, I lost both men and horses, and there was grievously killed, among others, a page, an Italian of gentle birth, whom I was bringing up with great care, and in him was extinguished a delightful youth full of great hope. (*a*) But this gentleman was in this respect so far gone in fear, and I saw that he was so nearly dead at every meeting with mounted men, and when we passed through places that were loyal to the king, that I divined at last that they were terrors which his conscience caused in him. It seemed to this poor man as if, through his mask and the crosses on his coat,[1] could be read in his heart his secret thoughts. So wonderful is the force of conscience! It makes us betray, accuse, and contend with ourselves, and in default of other testimony, it brings us forward against ourselves;

Occultum quatiens animo tortore flagellum.[2]

This tale is in the mouths of children. Bessus, a Pæonian, blamed for having in sport [3] pulled down a nest of sparrows and killed them, said that he had reason to do so because those little birds incessantly accused him falsely as the murderer of his father. Until then that parricide had been hidden and unknown; but the furies, avengers of the conscience, caused him himself to disclose who was to do penance for it.[4] Hesiod corrects the remark of Plato, that the punishment follows close upon the sin; for he says that it is born instantly, and at the same time with the sin.[5] Whoever ex-

[1] *De sa cazaque.*

[2] With the soul of a torturer, brandishing an invisible scourge. — Juvenal, *Satires*, XIII, 195.

[3] *De gayetê de cœur.*

[4] See Plutarch, *Of the delays of divine justice.*

[5] See *Ibid.*

pects punishment suffers it; and whoever has deserved it expects it.[1] Wickedness frames torments for itself;

Malum consilium consultori pessimum;[2]

as the wasp stings and hurts others, but itself more, for it thus loses its sting and its power for ever:[3]

Vitasque in vulnere ponunt.[4]

Cantharides have in themselves something which acts as an antidote to their poison by an opposition of nature. In like manner, when we take pleasure in vice, there is engendered an opposing displeasure in the conscience, which torments us with many painful fancies, waking and sleeping.[5]

(*b*) Quippe ubi se multi per somnia sæpe loquentes,
Aut morbo delirantes, protraxe ferantur,
Et celata diu in medium peccata dedisse.[6]

(*a*) Apollodorus dreamed that he saw himself flayed by the Scythians and then boiled in a cauldron, and that his heart muttered these words: "I have caused you all these ills."[7] No hiding-place avails the wicked, said Epicurus, because they can not feel assured that they are hidden, conscience revealing them to themselves.[8]

Prima est hæc ultio, quod se
Judice nemo nocens absolvitur.[9]

Even as conscience fills us with fear, so it fills us with assurance and confidence. (*b*) And I can say that I have walked through many perils with a much firmer step because of the

[1] See Seneca, *Epistle* 105.
[2] Bad counsel is worst for him that gives it. — Aulus Gellius, IV, 5.
[3] See Plutarch, *Of the delays of divine justice.*
[4] They put their lives into the sting. — Virgil, *Georgics*, IV, 238.
[5] See Plutarch, *Of the delays of divine justice.*
[6] Many criminals are said to have betrayed themselves by often talking in their sleep or in the delirium of fever, and to have revealed long-hidden crimes. — Lucretius, V, 1158.
[7] See Plutarch, *Of the delays of divine justice.*
[8] See Seneca, *Epistle* 97.
[9] The punishment beyond all other is that no guilty man is absolved by his own judgement. — Juvenal, *Satires*, XIII, 2.

secret knowledge I had of my desires and of the innocence of my intentions.

(*a*) Conscia mens ut cuique sua est, ita concipit intra
Pectora pro facto spemque metumque suo.[1]

There are a thousand examples; it will suffice to instance three of the same person. Scipio, being accused one day before the Roman people with a weighty accusation, instead of excusing himself or flattering his judges, said: "It will become you well to undertake to pass judgement on one by whose means you have the authority to pass judgement on all the world." [2] And at another time, for all reply to the imputations which a tribune of the people laid upon him, instead of pleading his cause, "Come, my fellow citizens," he cried, "let us go and render thanks to the gods for the victory they gave me over the Carthaginians on the same day as this"; and as he started toward the temple, the whole assembly, and even his accuser, were seen following him.[3] And Petilius having been incited by Cato to demand from him an accounting of the money used in the province of Antioch, Scipio, having come to the Senate because of this, produced the book of accounts which he had under his gown, and said that this book contained a true statement of receipts and expenditures; but as it had been demanded of him to deposit it in the registry,[4] he refused to give it up, saying that he did not choose to do that indignity to himself; and with his own hand, in the presence of the Senate, he destroyed the book, tearing it in pieces.[5] I do not believe that a seared [6] soul could feign such assurance. (*c*) Livy says that his spirit was too great, and by nature accustomed to too high a position, for him to comport himself as a criminal and to stoop to the degradation of defending his innocence.[7]

[1] According to the testimony of each man's mind, so he conceives in his breast hope or fear from his deed. — Ovid, *Fasti*, I, 485.

[2] See Plutarch, *How a man may praise himself*.

[3] See Aulus Gellius, IV, 18; Valerius Maximus, III, 7.1.

[4] *Au greffe*.

[5] See Aulus Gellius, IV, 18.

[6] *Cauterizée*.

[7] See Livy, XXXVIII, 52.

(*a*) The invention of instruments of torture is a dangerous one, and it seems as if they were a test of endurance rather than of truth. (*c*) Both he who can endure them and he who can not endure them conceal the truth. (*a*) For why shall pain make me confess what is true rather than force me to say what is not true? And, contrariwise, if he who has not done that of which he is accused has fortitude enough to endure those torments, why shall not he who has been guilty do the same, so precious a meed as life being proposed to him? I think that the foundation of that invention is based upon consideration of the force of conscience. For, in the case of the guilty man, it seems that conscience assists the torture to make him confess his wrongdoing, and that it weakens him; and on the other hand, that it gives the innocent man strength to endure the torture. To tell the truth, it is a method full of uncertainty and danger. (*b*) What would one not say, what would one not do, to avoid such grievous pains?

(*c*) Etiam innocentes cogit mentiri dolor.[1]

Whence it happens that the man whom the judge has tortured, in order not to put him to death if innocent, he puts to death both innocent and tortured.[2] (*b*) Very many have taken upon themselves[3] false confessions. Among whom I place Philotas, when I consider the circumstances of the indictment that Alexander brought against him, and the course of his torture.[4]

(*a*) But when all this is summed up, it is, they say, the least evil that human inability has ever been able to devise. (*c*) Very inhumanly, however, and very uselessly, in my opinion. Many nations, less barbarous in this respect than the Greeks and the Romans, who called them barbarous, think it horrible and cruel to torture and dismember a man with regard to whose crime you still are in doubt. What can

[1] Pain forces even the innocent to lie. — Publius Syrus. Montaigne found these lines in the *Commentary* of Vivès on St. Augustine's *De Civ. Dei*, XIX, 6.

[2] See St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, XIX, 6.

[3] *En ont chargé leur teste.*

[4] See Quintus Curtius, end of book XVII.

he do about your ignorance? Are not you unjust, who, in order not to kill him without reason, do worse than kill him? That this is so, observe how often he prefers to die without cause rather than go through that inquisition more painful than the condemnation, and which often by its severity anticipates the condemnation and executes it. I know not whence I take the following tale, but it represents precisely the character of our judicial procedure. A village woman laid an accusation before a general, a great lover of justice, against a soldier, for having snatched from her living children the small amount of broth she had left to sustain them, the army having despoiled all the villages of the neighbourhood. As to proof, there was none. The general, after he had cautioned the woman to look well to what she said, since she would be found guilty of a false accusation [1] if she lied, as she persisted, ordered the soldier's stomach to be opened to throw light on the truth of the matter. And the woman was found to be in the right.[2] An instructive condemnation.

CHAPTER VI

OF EXPERIENCE [3]

The title of this Essay in the original French is *De l'Exercitation*, a word that has almost passed out of the French language, and after receiving some half-dozen significations, is becoming obsolete in English. It is used here by Montaigne not quite in its Latin sense (one of its senses) of *practice*, but, rather, to signify the result of "practice" — *experience*. And he did not propose to write of "experience" in general, but of the experience of death. I have already pointed out how constantly Montaigne's mind was occupied with the idea of death, — in youth as in old age, in old age as in youth, — and at the same time how greatly his mood about it, his way of regarding it, changed. This Essay stands almost midway between his earlier and his later expressions. Later, he does not speak of death as "the greatest deed we have to accomplish"; earlier, he does not say humorously, "We can not test it more than once. We are all apprentices when we come to it."

[1] *D'autant qu'elle seroit coupable de son accusation.*

[2] See Froissart, IV, 87 (anno 1397). The general was Bajazet I.

[3] *De l'Exercitation.*

Stories of death-beds always had a peculiar interest for Montaigne, and it is a striking one that he tells here, or, rather, his own comment is striking when he says that his old Roman philosopher wished "that his own death might be of service to him as a lesson."

It seems to Montaigne that if we can not *learn* death, we have at least experiences that resemble it; that by sleep, Nature, "while we are living, presents to us the everlasting condition she holds for us after this life, thus accustoming us to it and taking from us fear of it."

Moreover, it is not death itself, but the forerunners of death, that we have reason to fear; and these do come into our *experience*, and against these we can strengthen ourselves by *practice*, especially since our imagination pictures many things to us as more painful than they are in reality. The paragraph in which he develops this thought is of great personal interest, and the unconscious expression of the strength of his sympathies (and this is only one of many similar relations) should silence those who talk of his egotism. How many men in comfort by their fireside are "dismayed and distressed" for those exposed to the storm outside — especially when they have learned by experience that it is not as bad as it seems!

As sleep resembles death, so conditions of extreme weakness resemble our last moments; and Montaigne had learned from experience how painless these may be, by the consequences of a fall from his horse, of which he tells the story at length. In speaking of his opinions on this point, it is touching to see how his memory brings to mind talks he had with his dead friend on these subjects.

The Essay originally ended a very few sentences after the close of his story, with the words, "this is not to teach another, it is what I am learning myself," and the subsequent pages have nothing to do with death. They are another Essay — and a most admirable and interesting one, in his very latest "manner." It is a most vigorous justification, an eloquent explanation, of his study of his *moi* — his own nature.

IT is not easy for argument and instruction, although we readily give credence to them, to be powerful enough to carry us to action, if, in addition, we do not exercise and train our mind by experience in the course that we wish her to follow: otherwise, when she is in a position to act, she will doubtless find herself impeded. This is the reason why those among the philosophers who have desired to attain the highest excellence have not been content to await in safety and repose the rigours of Fortune, lest she should surprise them while untried and new to the combat; rather, they have gone to meet her, and have knowingly subjected themselves to the test of difficulties. Some have abandoned wealth, to exercise themselves in voluntary pov-

erty;[1] others have sought toil and a painfully austere life, to enure themselves to suffering and to labour; others have deprived themselves of the most cherished parts of the body, as the eyes and the organs of generation, for fear that their use, too agreeable and too easy, would relax and enfeeble the constancy of the soul.[2] But to die, which is the greatest affair we have to achieve, practice can not aid us. We can, by habit and experience, fortify ourselves against pain, disgrace, indigence, and other like misfortunes; but as for death, we can essay it but once; we are all novices when we come to it.

In old days, there were men who were such excellent husbands of time that they tried, at the moment of death, to taste and savour it, and strained their wits to discover what that transition is; but they have not returned to tell us of it: —

nemo expergitus exstat.
Frigida quem semel est vitai pausa sequuta.[3]

Canius Julius, a noble Roman of singular courage and steadiness, having been condemned to death by that scoundrel[4] Caligula, over and above many marvellous proofs that he gave of his firmness when he was on the point of feeling the hand of the executioner, a philosopher, his friend, having asked him: "Well, Canius, in what frame is your mind at this moment?" he replied: "I am occupied in holding myself ready and intent with all my strength, to see whether, at the moment of death, so short and so soon past, I shall be able to perceive any flitting of the soul, and whether it will have any consciousness of its departure; so that, if I learn any thing about this, I may return thence, to

[1] An allusion to Crates. Cf. Book I, chap. 14: *Tel, pour arriver à la pauvreté, jetta ses escuz en cette mesme mer que tant d'autres fouillent de toutes pars pour y pescher des richesses* (Vol. I, p. 81); and Book I, chap. 39: *D'anticiper aussi les accidens de fortune, se priver des commoditez qui nous sont en main . . . jetter ses richesses emmy la riviere*, etc. (Vol. I, p. 322).

[2] Cf. the second passage cited in the preceding note.

[3] No one wakes upon whom the chill cessation of life has once come. — Lucretius, III, 929.

[4] *Maraut;* in 1580 to 1588: *monstre.*

give information afterward, if I can, to my friends." [1] This man philosophises, not only till death, but in death itself. What confidence was that, and what a proud spirit, to wish that his death should serve him as a lesson, and to be at liberty to think of other things in so momentous a business!

(*b*) Jus hoc animi morientis habebat.[2]

(*a*) Yet it seems to me that there is some way of familiarising ourselves with her,[3] and, in some sort, of making trial of her. We may have experience of her, if not complete and perfect, at least to such a degree that it may not be useless, and which may make us better prepared and more confident. If we can not overtake her, we can recognise her; and if we do not quite enter into her stronghold, at least we shall see and become familiar with its avenues. It is not without reason that we are taught to take heed to our very sleep, for the resemblance it bears to death.

(*c*) How easily we pass from waking to sleeping! With how little concern we lose consciousness of the light and of ourselves![4] Perchance the faculty of sleep, which deprives us of all action and all feeling, might seem useless and contrary to nature, were it not that, by this means, Nature teaches us that she has created us to die, as to live, and from our birth she shows us the eternal state which she has in store for us hereafter, to accustom us to it, and to take from us the fear of it. (*a*) But they who, by reason of some violent accident, have swooned and have thus lost all consciousness, they have, in my opinion, been very near to seeing her [5] true and natural visage; for, as to the instant and the point of transition, it is not to be feared that she brings with her any travail or discomfort, inasmuch as we can have no feeling without leisure. Our sufferings require time, which, for death, is so brief and so headlong, that she must necessarily be imperceptible. It is the paths that lead to her that we have to fear; and these may fall within our experience.

[1] See Seneca, *De Tranquillitate Vitæ*, XIV, 4–9.
[2] This power over his mind he had when dying. — Lucan, VIII, 636.
[3] That is, with death.
[4] Cf. Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, I, 38.
[5] That is, death's.

Many things seem to us more important in imagination than in fact. I passed a large part of my life in sound and perfect health: I mean, not sound simply, but joyful and ardent.[1] That condition, full of vigour and gaiety, made the thought of sickness so horrible to me that, when I came to experience it, I found these attacks mild and feeble compared with my fear.[2] (*b*) This is what I put to the proof every day: if I am sheltered in a comfortable room during a stormy and tempestuous night, I am dismayed and distressed for those who are out in the fields; if I am there myself, I do not even desire to be elsewhere. (*a*) The mere fact of being always confined to one room seemed intolerable to me. I was very soon used to staying there a week and a month, feverish and thirsty and weak; and I found that, when I was in health, I pitied the sick much more than I find myself an object of pity when I am one of them; and that the strength of my apprehension magnified almost by half the essence and truth of the thing. I hope that it will be the same with me about death, and that it is not worth the trouble I take in making so many preparations, in summoning and collecting so much assistance to sustain its assault; but, in any case, we can not give ourselves too much advantage.

During our third disturbances, or the second (I do not well remember which), having gone to ride one day a league or so from my house,— I am planted in the midst of all the turmoil of the civil wars in France,— thinking that I was in perfect safety, and so near my abode that I needed no better steed, I had taken a very easy-gaited, sure-footed horse. As I was returning, a sudden occasion having arisen for me to make use of this horse in a way that was not habitual for him, one of my people, a tall, strong fellow, mounted on a powerful roan [3] with a desperately hard mouth, fresh and mettlesome, to show spirit and outstrip his comrades, came at full speed directly in my path, and rushed like a colossus

[1] *Bouillante.*

[2] Cf. Book I, chap. 20: *Je trouve que j'ay bien plus affaire à digerer cette resolution à mourir quand je suis en vigueur et en pleine santé que je n'ay quand je suis malade* (Vol. 1, p. 118).

[3] *Roussin.*

on the little man and his little horse, and bore them down with his impetus and his weight, sending both of us heels over head; so that there the horse lay, thrown down, quite stunned, and I ten or twelve steps[1] farther on, like one dead, stretched out on my back, my face all bruised and skinned, my sword, which I had had in my hand, more than ten steps away, my belt broken, with no more movement or feeling than a log. It is the only time, to this hour, that I have ever been unconscious. They who were with me, after they had tried by every means in their power to bring me to, thinking me dead, took me in their arms and carried me, with much difficulty, to my house, which was about half a French league distant. On the way, and after I had, for more than two long hours, been supposed to be dead, I began to move and breathe; for so great a quantity of blood had gone into my stomach, that, to be rid of it, nature had need to revive her powers. They stood me on my feet, and I then threw up a pailful of clots of pure blood; and several times on the road I had to do the same thing. With that I began to recover a little life, but it was by such slow degrees that for a long stretch of time my feelings were much nearer death than life.

(*b*) Perche, dubbiosa anchor del suo ritorno,
Non s'assecura attonita la mente.[2]

(*a*) This recollection, which is very strongly impressed on my mind, presenting to me her image and idea almost in its actual nature,[3] reconciles me to her in some sort. When I there began to see, it was with a vision so confused, so weak, and so lifeless, that I could at first discern nothing but the light;

come quel ch'or apre or chiude
Gli occhi, mezzo tra'l sonno è l'esser desto.[4]

As for the functions of the mind, they came to life at the

[1] *Pas* — an entirely uncertain measure.

[2] Because, still doubtful of its return, the astonished mind is not assured. — Tasso, *Gierusalemme Liberata*, XII, 74.

[3] *Si pres du naturel.*

[4] As he who now opens, now shuts his eyes, half way between sleep and waking. — Tasso, *Ibid.*, VIII, 26. (Added in 1582.)

same rate of progress with those of the body. I saw myself all covered with blood, for my doublet was stained everywhere with that that I had thrown up. The first thought that came to me was that I had been shot in the head; in truth, there was a good deal of firing in our neighbourhood at that time. It seemed to me as if my life hung only on the end of my tongue; I closed my eyes, to assist, so it seemed to me, in expelling it, and I took pleasure in languishing and letting myself go. It was a fancy that did no more than float on the surface of my mind, as gentle and as weak as all the rest, but, in truth, not only exempt from trouble, but indeed with a mingling of that pleasure which we feel when gliding gently into sleep.

I believe that those whom we see fainting from weakness in the death-agony find themselves in this same state; and I hold that we pity them without cause, deeming that they are distressed by severe sufferings, or that the soul is beset by painful cogitations. It has always been my judgement, contrary to the opinion of many others, and especially of Etienne de la Boëtie, that they whom we see to be thus overthrown and deadened, as they draw near their end, or worn out by the length of their sickness, or by the occurrence of apoplexy or of the falling sickness, —

> (*b*) vi morbi sæpe coactus
> Ante oculos aliquis nostros, ut fulminis ictu,
> Concidit, et spumas agit, ingemit, et fremit artus;
> Desipit, extentat nervos, torquetur, anhelat
> Inconstanter, et in jactando membra fatigat,[1] —

(*a*) or of a wound in the head, whom we hear groaning and sometimes exhaling sharp sighs, though we derive therefrom, and from some motions that we see them make with the body, indications from which it seems that they still retain consciousness, — I have always thought, I say, that both the soul and the body were buried and asleep;

[1] Often a man, constrained by the violence of a disease, falls before our eyes, as if struck by a thunderbolt, and foams at the mouth, and groans; and his body trembles; he loses his reason, his sinews stiffen, he is racked, he pants fitfully, and wearies his limbs with tossing. — Lucretius, III, 487.

(*b*) Vivit, et est vitæ nescius ipse suæ; [1]

(*a*) and I could not believe that, with such complete powerlessness of the limbs and so great a failure of the senses, the soul can maintain any inward power to take cognisance of itself; and consequently [I believed], that they had no reasoning faculty which tormented them, and could make them estimate and feel the wretchedness of their condition; and, therefore, that they were not greatly to be pitied.

(*b*) I can conceive for myself no state so insupportable and horrible as to have the soul living and in trouble, without means of manifesting itself; as I would say of those who are sent to execution, having had their tongues cut out, if it were not that, in that sort of death, the most mute seems to me the most fitting, if it is accompanied by a composed and serious face; and like those wretched prisoners who fall into the hands of the villainous, brutal soldiers of these days, by whom they are tortured with every kind of cruel treatment, to extort from them some excessive and impossible ransom, held meanwhile in such conditions and in such a place that they have no means whatever of expressing and indicating their thoughts and their wretchedness.[2]

(*a*) The poets have imagined some gods favourable to the deliverance of those thus dragging out a lingering death, —

hunc ego Diti
Sacrum jussa fero, teque isto corpore solvo.[3]

And the short and meaningless words and replies that are sometimes forced from them by dint of screaming in their ears and harrying them, or the movements that seem to bear some relation to what one asks of them, are no evidence that they are yet living — at least, a complete life. In the same way it happens to us, when we are stumbling into sleep, before it has wholly possessed us, to perceive as in a dream what is going on about us, and to follow the voices

[1] He lives, but is not conscious of his own life. — Ovid, *Tristia*, I, 3.12.

[2] This whole addition of 1588 is difficult of connection with what precedes and what follows.

[3] I am commanded to carry to Pluto this sacred [lock of hair], and I release thee from this body. — Virgil, *Æneid*, IV, 702.

with a confused and uncertain hearing, which seems to reach only the borders of the mind; and we make replies, to the last words addressed to us, which have more chance than meaning.

Now, since I have actually experienced this, I have no doubt that I have judged rightly about it hitherto; for, in the first place, though wholly unconscious, I laboured to open my doublet as best I could [1] (for I was unarmed); and yet I know that I was not aware in my mind of any thing that hurt me; for there are many motions we make which do not proceed from our will: —

(*b*) Semianimesque micant digiti ferrumque retractant.[2]

(*a*) Those who fall throw out their arms in advance of their fall, by a natural impulse which causes our limbs to assume functions (*b*) and to be stirred apart from our reason.

Falciferos memorant currus abscindere membra,
Ut tremere in terra videatur ab artubus id quod
Decidit abscisum, cum mens tamen atque hominis vis
Mobilitate mali non quit sentire dolorem.[3]

(*a*) My stomach was oppressed by that clotted blood; my hands went thither of themselves, as they often do to a place that itches, against the counsel of our will. There are many animals, and likewise men, whose muscles are seen to contract and move after they are dead. Chacun sçait par experience qu'il y a des parties qui se branslent, dressent et couchent souvent sans son congé. Now, those painful sensations which touch us only externally [4] can not be said to belong to us. To make them ours a man must needs be completely engaged in them; and the pains that the foot or the hand feels while we are asleep are not our own. As I drew near my house, where the alarm of my fall had already ar-

[1] *A belles ongles.*

[2] The half-dead fingers contract and seek to grasp the sword. — Virgil, *Æneid*, X, 396.

[3] They tell how scythed chariots cut off limbs, yet the part cut from the mutilated body is seen to quiver on the ground; whilst, from the suddenness of the mischief, the mind and faculties of the men do not even feel pain. — Lucretius, III, 642, 644–646.

[4] *Par l'escorce.*

rived, and members of my household met me with the outcries usual in such cases, not only did I make some answer to the questions they asked me, but also they say that I bethought me to order that a horse should be given to my wife, whom I saw stumbling and toiling along the road, which is hilly and rough. It would seem as if that solicitude must have come from a heedful mind; but the fact is that I was not really conscious of it: they were idle thoughts, beclouded, which were excited by the senses of sight and hearing, but did not come from my real self.[1] I did not even know either whence I came, or whither I was going, nor could I weigh and consider what they asked me. These were trifling matters, which the senses produced of themselves, as by habit; what the mind contributed to them was as in a dream, it being very lightly touched and, as it were, merely shaped [2] and fashioned by the gentle pressure of the senses. Meanwhile, my condition was, in truth, very agreeable and placid: I had no distress either for others or for myself; it was languor and extreme weakness, without pain. I saw my house without recognising it. When they had put me to bed, I had a sense of infinite comfort in that repose, for I had been villainously pulled and hauled by those poor men, who had taken the trouble to carry me in their arms over a long and very bad road, and had tired themselves out several times, taking turns. They offered me many remedies, none of which I would take, holding it for certain that I was mortally wounded in the head. To say truth, it would have been a very happy death, for the weakness of my reason prevented me from thinking any thing at all about it, and that of the body from feeling any thing at all of it. I let myself slide along so gently, and in so soft and easy a fashion, that I know of hardly any other act less burdensome than that was. When I began to come to life again, and to recover my faculties, —

(*b*) Ut tandem sensus convaluere mei,[3] —

[1] *De chez moi.*

[2] *Lechée.* Cf. Book II, chap. 12: *Comme les ours façonnent leurs petits en les lechant à loisir.*

[3] When at length my senses regained their powers. — Ovid, *Tristia*, I, 3.14.

(*a*) which was two or three hours later, I found myself entirely possessed with pain, my limbs being all bruised and jarred by my fall; and I was so ill, in consequence, two or three nights after that, that I believed again I was dying, but by a more painful death; and I still feel the shock of that crash.[1] I must not forget this — that the last thing I could return to was the memory of this accident; and I made them tell me over and over again where I was going, where I was coming from, at what time it happened to me, before I could conceive it. As for the manner of my fall, they concealed it from me, for the sake of him who was the cause of it, and invented for me other accounts. But a long time after, and the first day when my memory had half opened and put before me the state I was in when I saw that horse rushing upon me (for I had seen him at my heels, and looked upon myself as a dead man; but this thought was so sudden that it did not permit the birth of fear), it seemed to me that it was a lightning flash that struck and shook my soul, and that I was returning from the other world. This tale of so trivial an event is of little moment, were it not for the instruction I have drawn from it for myself; since, truly, I find that, to familiarise oneself with death, one need only be near it. Now, as Pliny says, every man is a most excellent source of instruction for himself, provided that he has the ability to examine himself closely.[2] This that I set down here is not my teaching, it is my study; and it is not the lesson for another, it is for myself; [3] (*c*) and yet I should not be blamed if I impart it. That which is of service to me may perchance be of service to another. Moreover, I mar nothing, I make use only of what belongs to me. And if I play the fool, it is at my own expense, and does no harm to any one. For it is a kind of foolishness that dies within me, and has no consequences. We have heard of but two or three of the ancients who travelled this road, and, even so, we can not say whether it was in quite the same manner as this,

[1] In 1580: *quatre ans apres.*

[2] See Pliny, *Natural History*, XXII, 24.

[3] *Ce n'est pas ici ma doctrine, c'est mon estude; et n'est pas la leçon d'autruy, c'est la mienne.* The Essay ended here in all editions before 1595.

knowing only their names. No one since has followed in their footsteps. It is a difficult undertaking, and more so than it appears, to follow so vagrant a course as that of our mind; to penetrate the dim depths of its inmost folds; to select and note so many slight evidences [1] of its emotions. And it is a novel and unusual employment, which withdraws us from the common occupations of the world, aye, and from those most commended.

It is many years that I have had only myself for the target of my thoughts, that I have observed and studied myself alone; truly, if I do study any thing else, it is only to fit it immediately upon myself, or, to say better, within myself. And it does not seem to me that I make a mistake if, as is done in other branches of learning, unquestionably less useful, I share with others what I have learned in this direction; although I am scarcely content with the progress I have made in it. There is no description equal in difficulty to the description of oneself, nor certainly in usefulness. Moreover, one must dress oneself carefully,[2] and also dispose and control oneself to appear in public. Now, I constantly trim myself up, for I constantly describe myself. Custom has made speaking of oneself blameworthy, and resolutely prohibits it, in detestation of the boastfulness which seems always to be connected with testimony about oneself. Instead of wiping the child's nose, this may be called wiping it off.[3]

In vitium ducit culpæ fuga.[4]

I find more harm than good in this remedy. But if it were true that it is, of necessity, presumption to talk to the public about oneself, I must not, according to my general plan, refuse to take the step that makes known this unseemly quality, since it is a part of me; and I must not conceal this fault, which I not only practise, but preach. Moreover, to say what I believe about it, this same custom is wrong in

[1] *Tant de menus airs.*

[2] *Se testonner.*

[3] *Au lieu qu'on doit moucher l'enfant, cela s'apelle l'enaser.*

[4] Instead of an error, a fault is committed. — Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 31. Literally, "avoidance of an error leads to a fault"; but the free rendering alone fits Montaigne's thought.

condemning wine because many intoxicate themselves with it. One can misuse only things which are in themselves good. And I think concerning this rule [1] that it concerns only the general weakness. Such rules are to no purpose: neither the saints, whom we hear speak so approvingly of them, nor the philosophers, nor the theologians, are restrained by them.[2] Nor am I, although I am as little the one as the other. If they do not arrange to write of themselves,[3] at all events, when the occasion leads them to it, they do not hesitate to exhibit themselves in public.[4]

Of what does Socrates treat more fully than of himself? To what does he more frequently direct the discourse of his disciples than to talk of themselves — not of the lesson in their book, but of the existence and movement of their souls? We speak of ourselves devoutly to God and to our confessor, as our neighbours [5] do to all the people. But, some one will reply, we speak only of our sins. Then we speak of every thing; for our very virtue is faulty and to be repented of. My profession and my art is living. Whoever forbids me to speak of this according to my perceptions, experience, and habit, let him bid the architect talk about buildings, not according to his own ideas, but according to those of his neighbour; according to another's knowledge, not according to his own. If it is vain-glory to proclaim one's own merits, why does not Cicero extol the eloquence of Hortensius, Hortensius that of Cicero? Perchance they mean that I should give witness of myself by works and deeds, not barely by words. I depict chiefly my thoughts, a shapeless subject, which can not be seen in material form; [6] only with great difficulty can I enclose it in this unsubstantial body of words. The wisest and most devout men have shunned throughout their lives all visible deeds. Deeds would speak more of chance than of me. They witness to their own char-

[1] That is, the rule forbidding one to talk about oneself.

[2] *Ce sont brides a veaux* [literally, "bridles for calves"] *des quelles ny les Saincts . . . ne se brident.* The play upon words is impossible of reproduction in English.

[3] *S'ils n'en escrivent à point nommé* (= *de parti pris*).

[4] *De se jetter bien avant sur le trotoir.*

[5] That is, the Protestants.

[6] *Qui ne peut tumber en production ouvragiere.*

acter, not to mine, unless it be conjecturally and vaguely; specimens of a special exhibition.[1] I expose myself completely to view:[2] it is a *skeletos* in which, all together, the veins, the muscles, the tendons appear, each part in its place. The effect of a cough is apparent in one part of them, the effect of pallor or beating of the heart in another part, and doubtfully.[3] It is not what I do that I describe; it is myself, it is my essence.

I maintain that a man must be prudent in estimating himself, and equally conscientious in declaring his estimation, be it high or low, indifferently. If I seemed to myself good and wise, or nearly so, I should proclaim it at the top of my voice. To speak of yourself as less than you really are is folly, not modesty. To account yourself as less than you are worth is cowardice and pusillanimity, according to Aristotle.[4] No virtue is helped by falseness, and truth never mistakes. To speak of yourself as more than you really are is not always presumption, but, again, it is often folly. To be pleased to excess with what one is, to be possessed by unreasonable self-love, is, in my opinion, the root of that vice.[5] The best remedy for its cure is to do just the opposite of what they advise who, by forbidding a man to speak of himself, thereby forbid him yet more to think of himself. Pride lies in thought. The tongue can have but a very small part in it. It seems to them that to occupy yourself about yourself is to take pleasure in yourself; to frequent and be on intimate terms with yourself is to hold yourself too dear. It may be so. But such excess[6] is found only in those who know their own selves but superficially; who are intent upon their external affairs; who call it dreaming and idleness for a man to converse with himself; to fashion and build himself up is to construct castles in Spain; regarding themselves as matters of indifference and strangers to themselves. If any

[1] *D'une montre particuliere.*

[2] That is, in his writings.

[3] This sentence is so nearly unintelligible to the translator, that the French text is given entire: *L'effaict de la toux en produisoit une partie; l'effaict de la pallur ou battemant de cœur, un' autre, et doubteusement.*

[4] See *Nicomachæan Ethics*, IV, 7.

[5] That is, of presumption.

[6] Of censure.

man be excited about his learning, looking at those below him, let him turn his eyes upward to past ages: he will lower his horns, finding there so many thousand spirits that tread him under foot. If he conceives a flattering opinion of his own valour, let him remember the lives of Scipio, of Epaminondas, of so many armies, so many nations, who leave him very far behind them. No special quality will make that man proud, who shall at the same time take into account so many other imperfect and weak qualities in him, and, at last, the nullity of the human condition. Because Socrates alone had seriously digested the precept of his God, to know himself, and through this study had come to despise himself, he alone was deemed worthy of the title of Sage. He who shall know himself thus, let him boldly make himself known by his mouth.

CHAPTER VII

MARKS OF HONOUR [1]

THERE is excellent good sense in this Essay; but it is a good sense so remote from modern conditions of life that it seems almost useless to us, and our interest consequently centres on the mention in it of the historic "order" of Saint-Michel, because of Montaigne's personal interest in that. On a later page (chapter 12) he says: "I asked of fortune, as eagerly as any thing, the order of Saint-Michel in my youth"; but when it was bestowed on him, it was no longer of much value to him, it had been made so common.

It was in 1571 that Montaigne received the *cordon de Saint Michel* from Charles IX through the hands of his friend Gaston de Foix, marquis de Trans, the father-in-law of Madame Diane de Foix (to whom the Essay on the Education of Children is addressed).

Brantôme has a foolish page about this: "We have seen councillors issue forth from the halls of parliament, drop the gown and the square cap, and undertake to wear a sword and to put on immediately this collar, without any other indication of having known war; as did the sieur de Montaigne, whose more fitting course would have been to continue to make use of his pen in writing essays than to put on a sword which did not so well become him."—*Discours sur les capitaines illustres*, Article "Tavanne."

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[1] *Des Recompenses d'Honneur.*

THEY who write the life of Augustus Cæsar notice this in his training of his troops, that he was wonderfully liberal in gifts to those who deserved them, but that he was equally sparing of purely honourable guerdons.[1] Yet he himself had been gratified by his uncle with all the military symbols [2] before ever he had been to the wars. A happy idea it was, and one accepted by most of the governments in the world, to establish certain idle and valueless signs to honour and reward valour, like wreaths of laurel, of oak, of myrtle, the shape of some garment, the privilege of riding in a coach in the city, or at night with a torch, some special seat at public assemblies, the prerogative of bearing divers surnames and titles, certain arrangements on coats-of-arms, and such matters, the use of which has been variously accepted, according to the judgement of different nations, and still continues. We, for our part, and many of our neighbours, have orders of knighthood which were instituted to this end.

It is, in truth, a very good and profitable custom to find means of recognising the worth of rare and excellent men, and pleasing and satisfying them, by rewards which in no wise burden the public and cost the prince nothing. And what had always been known from ancient experience, and what we too could formerly observe among ourselves, — that men of high rank [3] were more eager for such rewards than for those in which there was gain and profit, — is not without reason and much justification.[4] If with the prize, which should be simply one of honour, we mingle other advantages and riches, that commixture, instead of increasing its estimation, diminishes and detracts from it. The Order of Saint-Michel, which was so long in credit among us, had no greater advantage than this, that it had no connection with any other advantage. The result was that formerly there was no office or position, whatever it might be, to

[1] *Des pures recompenses d'honneur.* The word *recompense* is translated by varying words, because no one English word covers so much ground. See Suetonius, *Life of Augustus.*

[2] *Toutes les recompenses militaires.*

[3] *Gens de qualité.* In early editions, *Gens d'honneur.*

[4] *Et grande apparence.*

which the nobility laid claim with such desire and longing as to the Order, nor any rank which brought with it more respect and eminence; since valour eagerly embraces, and ardently aspires to, a reward that belongs solely to itself, rather glorious than useful. For, in truth, other gifts have not so worthy an employment, since they are employed on every sort of occasion.[1] With money we recompense the service of a valet, the diligence of a courier, and dancing, tumbling, speaking,[2] and the basest services that we receive; aye, and with money vice is paid — flattery, pandering, treachery; it is no wonder that valour accepts and desires less readily that sort of common coin than that which is proper and peculiar to it, altogether noble and of the right stamp. Augustus was wise in being much more careful and sparing of this than of the other sort, inasmuch as honour is a prerogative which derives its very essence from its rarity; and it is the same with virtue:

Cui malus est nemo, quis bonus esse potest.[3]

We do not remark in commendation of a man that he takes care of the bringing up of his children, inasmuch as it is a common action, however right it may be; (*c*) any more than [4] a tall tree where the whole forest is alike. (*a*) I do not think that any citizen of Sparta prided himself upon his valour,— for it was a universal virtue in that nation, — and as little upon loyalty and contempt for riches. No reward is due to any virtue, however great, which has passed into a custom; and indeed I know not if we should ever call it great when it is universal.

Since, then, these remunerations of honour have no other value and estimation than that few enjoy them, to make them worth nothing, it needs only to be lavish of them. If there are more persons now than in the past who deserve our Order, yet we must not debase its estimation. And it

[1] Editions 1580 to 1588 add: *c'est une monnoye à toute espèce de marchandise.*

[2] *Le parler.* How we recompense "speaking" with money is not clear.

[3] How can he who finds no man bad find any man good? — Martial, XII, 82.

[4] "We remark," understood.

may easily happen that more deserve it, for no one of the virtues spreads so easily as military valour. There is another,[1] true, perfect, and wise, of which I am not speaking (and I use this word [2] according to our usage), much nobler than this one and more complete, which is a power and assurance of the soul, despising equally every sort of adverse accident: equitable, uniform, and constant, of which ours is but a very little ray. Usage, education, example, and custom can do whatever they will in the establishing of this one [3] of which I am speaking, and can easily make it common; as it is very easy to see by the experience which our civil wars afford us. (*b*) Let some one now bring us together and excite our whole nation to join in a common enterprise — we should make our former military renown to flourish anew.

(*a*) It is most certain that the bestowal of the Order did not in the past consider valour only; it looked further. It was never the remuneration of a gallant soldier, but of a famous captain. The knowing how to obey did not merit so honourable a guerdon. Formerly for this honour there was required a more universal skill in the art of war, which included the greater part of the qualities, and the most important ones, of a military man, (*c*) *neque enim eædem militares et imperatoriæ artes sunt*,[4] — (*a*) who was also of a rank suited to such a dignity. But as I was saying, even if there are now more men deserving of it than there were found to be formerly, it is not well therefore to make it more general; and it would have been better to fail to endow with it all those to whom it was due than to lose forever, as we have done, the benefit of so useful a conception. No man of spirit prides himself on what he possesses in common with many others; and to-day those persons who have least merited this recompense make most show of disdaining it, to place themselves thereby on the level of those who have been

[1] Virtue.

[2] That is to say, I call *vaillance* (valour) a virtue.

[3] That is, valour (*vaillance*).

[4] For the trade of a soldier and of a general are not the same. — Livy, XXV, 19. The citation would fit much better after "guerdon" above.

wronged by the scattering broadcast and the debasing of this honour, which was due more especially to them.

Now to expect, by wiping out and abolishing this Order, to be able instantly to restore to favour and renew a similar custom, is not an undertaking suited to a time so lawless and unsound as that in which we now find ourselves; and it will consequently happen that the later one [1] will incur from its birth the penalties which have ruined the other. The rules for dispensing this new Order would need to be extremely stiff and contracted to give it any authority; and this tumultuous time is not able to bear a tight and firm rein; besides which, before we can have faith in this, we must have lost the memory of the first one, and of the contempt into which it has fallen.

This place might admit some discourse on the high estimation of valour and the difference between this and other virtues; but Plutarch having often recurred to that subject,[2] it would be idle for me to deal with it by reporting here what he says about it. This is worth considering, that our nation gives to *vaillance* the first rank among the virtues, as its name shews, which comes from *valeur;* and that, according to our custom, when we say a man of much worth or an excellent man,[3] in the phrase of our court and our nobility, it means nothing more than a valiant man after the Roman fashion. For among the Romans the general appellation *virtue* takes its etymology from strength.[4] The peculiar, sole, and essential characteristic of the nobility in France is the military vocation. It is probable that the first virtue that made itself manifest among men, and gave advantage to some over others, was this one, whereby the strongest and bravest made themselves masters of the weakest, and acquired preëminence and particular renown; whence this honour and dignity in speech remained with it; or else, that those nations, being very warlike, gave the palm to that one

[1] The Ordre du Saint-Esprit, established by Henri III, in 1578.

[2] In 1580 to 1588 we read here: *et nous estant si familier par l'air Français qu'on luy a donné si parfaict et si plaisant*, referring to Amyot's translation.

[3] *Un homme qui vaut beaucoup, ou un homme de bien.*

[4] *La force*, that is, *virtus*. Cf. Book I, chap. xx (Vol. I, pp. 107, 108).

of the virtues which was most familiar to them, and the most suitable appellation. Just as our disposition, combined with the feverish solicitude that we have regarding the chastity of women, has in the same way this result, that to say a good woman, a worthy woman, a woman of honour and virtue, really means to us nothing more than a chaste woman; as if, to bind them to this duty, we made all others a matter of indifference, and let them have a loose rein for every other vice, thus bargaining to induce them to give up this one.

CHAPTER VIII

OF THE AFFECTION OF FATHERS FOR THEIR CHILDREN

The lover of Montaigne perhaps "loves" this Essay as much as any; but he has no very logical reasons to assign for this preference. If you ask him why it charms him, he can only answer: "Because it is Montaigne." There is no higher, deeper, stronger feeling in it than other men have expressed on this same subject; it has no special wit or wisdom; but no other man has ever expressed himself with just this *manner*, of which one never wearies. It is "as pure as water and as good as bread." What Madame de Sévigné said is echoed by every reader — she is writing from Livry: "I have found entertainment in a volume of Montaigne that I did not think I had brought with me. Ah! the charming man! What good company he is! He is an old friend of mine, but by dint of being old, he is new to me. I can not read without tears what the maréchal de Montluc says of the regret that he felt in not having imparted himself to his son, and in having left him in ignorance of the tenderness he felt for him. Read this page, I beg you, and tell me what you find in it. It is in a letter to Madame d'Estissac about the love of fathers to their children. Mon Dieu! how full this book is of good sense!"

This Essay is one to which several long additions were made, and of which several passages were *réfondu*.

In the first edition (1580) the praises of Madame d'Estissac were more warmly expressed than in the later editions. Originally Montaigne spoke of *l'honneur et reverence singuliere que j'ay tousjours rendu à vos merites et à vos vertuz;* and, in the same sentence, of *vos aultres grandes qualitês*. In 1588, these phrases were omitted or altered. One feels a little gossiping curiosity about the change. But she could not complain — with the delightful eulogium of her *affection maternelle* that was left.

Just before the publication of 1580, this lady — after fifteen years of widowhood — had remarried. Her son was the Monsieur d'Estissac who, in 1580, accompanied Montaigne on his travels. In her youth she had been the mistress of Cardinal Bourbon.

To Madame d'Estissac

MADAME, if the strangeness and the novelty of this foolish enterprise, which are wont to give value to things, do not save me, I shall never come forth with honour from it; and it is so fantastical and has an aspect so far removed from common custom, that that may make it pass. It was a melancholy mood, and consequently one much opposed to my natural disposition, brought about by weariness of the solitude in which a few years ago I buried myself, which first put into my head this idle thought of writing. And then, finding myself entirely unprovided and empty of all other matters, I proposed myself to myself for argument and for subject. (*c*) It is the only book in the world of its kind,[1] (*a*) and is of an odd and extravagant design. Thus there is nothing in this work worthy to be noticed except that singularity; for to a subject so futile and abject the best draftsman in the world could not have given a shape deserving consideration.

Now, Madame, having to portray myself to the life, I should have forgotten one point of importance therein, had I not there set forth the honour[2] in which I have always held your merit. And I desire to say this, especially at the beginning of this chapter, because, among your other good qualities, that of the affection which you have bestowed on your children holds one of the highest places. Whoever may know the age at which Monsieur d'Estissac, your husband, left you a widow; the great and honourable alliances that had been proposed to you — as many as to any lady in France of your rank; the courage and strength with which you have supported, during so many years and amid so many thorny obstacles, the burden and guidance of affairs which have carried you into every corner of France and which keep you still besieged; the fortunate direction of

[1] Cf. chap. 6, p. 99, *supra*.

[2] In 1580–1588: *et reverence singuliere*.

them which you have made by your unaided prudence or good fortune, he will readily say with me that we have no example of maternal affection in our days more manifest than yours. I praise God, Madame, that it has been so well employed; for the good hopes which Monsieur d'Estissac, your son, gives of himself are a sufficient assurance that, when he is grown up, you will receive from him the obedience and gratitude of a very good child. But since, by reason of his youth, he has been unable to remark the services of exceeding value which he has received from you in so great number, I desire — if these lines shall some day fall into his hands, when I shall have neither lips nor voice to speak to him — that he may receive from me this testimony in all verity, which will be even more vividly affirmed to him by the good results which, please God, he will be conscious of: that there is no gentleman in France who owes more to his mother than he does, and that he can give in the future no more certain proof of his uprightness and his virtue than by recognising you as such.[1]

If there be any truly natural law, that is to say, any instinct which is seen to be universally and unchangeably implanted in beasts and in ourselves (a matter not beyond dispute), I may say that, in my opinion, after the solicitude that every animal has for its own preservation, and to fly from whatever is harmful, the affection that the begetter bears to the begotten holds the second place in this class. And because Nature seems to have made this acceptable to us, having regard to the extension and forward movement of the successive parts of this structure of hers, it is no wonder if, in the other direction, from children to their parents, it is not so great. (*c*) We may add this other Aristotelian reflection, that he who has done a good deed for some one loves him more than he is loved by him; and he to whom aught is owed loves more than he who owes; and every workman loves his work more than he would be loved by it if that work had feeling. Because what we hold dear is existence; and existence consists of movement and action. Consequently every one exists, in some sort, in his work. He who

[1] *Qu'en vous reconnaissant pour telle;* that is, "as the most devoted of mothers"(?).

confers a benefit performs a noble and honourable action; he who receives it performs a useful one only; now the useful is much less lovable than the honourable. The honourable is stable and permanent, affording constant gratification to him who has done such an action. The useful easily disappears and slips away; and the memory of it is neither so vivid nor so agreeable. The things are dearest to us which have cost us most; and it costs more to give than to take.[1]

(*a*) Since it has pleased God to endow us with some capacity for reasoning, so that we should not be, like the beasts, in slavish subjection to general laws, but should bend to them with judgement and of our free will, we may well yield a little to the simple authority of Nature, but not allow ourselves to be tyrannically carried away by it; reason alone should have the guidance of our inclinations. For my part, my feeling is strangely insensible to those inclinations which spring up in us without the intervention and bidding of our judgement. As, for instance, touching the subject of which I am talking, I can not accept the ardour with which some people caress children scarcely born, who have neither any mental action nor any distinguishable bodily shape whereby they can make themselves loveable; (*c*) and I have never willingly allowed them to be nurtured near me. (*a*) A true and reasonable affection should be born and should increase with the knowledge that they give us of themselves; and then, if they deserve it, our natural inclination keeping step with our reason, it should cherish them with a truly paternal regard, and it should likewise judge them if they are aught else,[2] always yielding to reason, notwithstanding the force of nature. Very often it is the reverse; and most commonly we feel more moved by the frolickings and games and puerile nonsense of our children than we are later by their mature acts, as if we had loved them for our pastime, like monkeys, not like human beings.[3] And a parent may be very liberal in supplying playthings in their childhood, who becomes close-fisted at the slightest

[1] See Aristotle, *Nicomachæan Ethics*, IX, 7.

[2] *S'ils sont autres;* that is, if they are unworthy.

[3] In 1580–1588: *pour le plaisir que nous en recevions, non pour eux mesmes.*

outlay necessary when they are grown up. Indeed, it seems that our jealousy at seeing them come forward and enjoy the world when we are not far from leaving it makes us more sparing and niggardly to them; it annoys us that they tread on our heels (*c*) as if to urge us to depart; (*a*) and yet, if this were to be feared, since the order of things decrees that they can not, to speak plainly, exist or live save at the expense of our existence and of our life, we ought not to undertake to be fathers.

For my part, I think that it is cruelty and injustice not to welcome them to a share and partnership in our property, and as associates in the knowledge of our domestic affairs, when they are capable of this, and not to diminish and restrict our pleasures to provide for theirs, since we engendered them to this end. It is an injustice that a father, old, used-up, and half-dead, should enjoy alone, in the chimney-corner, wealth which would suffice for the advancement and support of many children, and should let them in the meantime, for lack of means, lose their best years without being brought into public service and to men's knowledge. They are driven in desperation to seek by some way, however dishonourable it may be, to provide for their needs; as I have seen in my days many young men of good families so addicted to stealing that no correction could turn them from it. I know one, very well connected, to whom, at the request of a brother of his, a most honourable and gallant man, I spoke once on a time for that purpose. He answered me and confessed frankly that he had been driven to this foul course by the severity and avarice of his father; but that he now was so accustomed to it that he could not refrain from it; and just then he had been caught stealing the rings of a lady at whose morning reception he had been, with many others. This made me remember the tale I had heard of another gentleman so shaped and fashioned by this noble art in the days of his youth, that afterwards, when he was master of his property, having determined to abandon this trade, he still could not, if he passed a shop where there was any thing of which he had need, prevent himself from stealing it, with the penalty of sending afterward to pay for it. I have seen many so trained and wonted to this, that

even among their comrades they usually stole what they intended to return.

(*b*) I am a Gascon, and yet there is no vice of which I have less comprehension. I detest it a little more by instinct than I blame it by reason; even in desire I would not rob any one of any thing. (*a*) This province is, in truth, a little more discredited in this particular than the others of the French nation; yet we have seen in our day, at divers times, men of good families, of other provinces, in the hands of justice, convicted of many shocking robberies. I fear that we must, in some degree, attribute this disorder to that vice [1] of the fathers. And if one should answer me, as did one day a nobleman of excellent sense, that he was sparing of his wealth, not to derive from it any other profit and use than to make himself honoured and sought after by his kindred; and that, years having deprived him of all other powers, it was the sole resource left him to maintain himself in authority in his family, and to avoid being despised and scorned by all the world (*c*) (truly, not old age alone, but every weakness according to Aristotle, fosters avarice [2]), (*a*) that has some force; but it is a remedy for a disease of which we should eschew the birth. That father is much to be pitied who retains the affection of his children only by the need they have of his assistance, if that can be called affection. We must make ourselves respected by our virtue and our ability, and loveable by our kindness and the gentleness of our manner. Even the ashes of a rich substance have their value; and the bones and relics of honourable persons we are accustomed to hold in respect and veneration. Old age can never be so feeble and distasteful in one who has lived an honourable life that it is not venerable, especially to his children, whose hearts should be schooled to their duties by reason, not by necessity and want, or by harshness and force.

Et errat longe, mea quidem sententia,
Qui imperium credat esse gravius aut stabilius
Vi quod fit, quam illud quod amicitia adjungitur.[3]

[1] That is, avarice. [2] See *Nicomachæan Ethics*, I, 57.

[3] And he greatly errs, in my opinion, who believes that authority to be stronger or more stable that acts by violence, than that which is united with friendship. — Terence, *Adelphi*, I, 1.40.

(*b*) I blame all violence in the education of a tender soul who is trained for honour and liberty. There is I know not what that is servile in harshness and constraint; and I hold that what can not be accomplished by reasoning and by discretion and skill is never accomplished by force. I was thus brought up. They say that in all my early years I felt the rod only twice, and then very mildly. I owed the like treatment to my own children; they have all died at nurse; but Leonor, one sole daughter who has escaped that ill hap, has arrived at six years or more of age without any thing other than words, and very gentle words, being employed in her guidance and for punishment of her childish faults, her mother's indulgence readily adapting itself to this. And even if my hopes should be here frustrated, there are enough other causes that can be assigned without laying the blame on my methods, which I know to be reasonable and according to nature. I should have been much more scrupulous in this matter with regard to male children, who are less born to subjection and of more free condition; I should have loved to enlarge their hearts with ingenuousness and frankness. I have seen no other effect from the rod than to make the soul more cowardly or more deceitfully wilful.[1]

(*a*) Do we wish to be loved by our children? Do we wish to take from them all occasion to desire our death[2] — albeit in truth no occasion for so shocking a desire can be either just or pardonable; (*c*) *nullum scelus rationem habet*[3]? (*a*) Then let us arrange their lives reasonably, as far as is in our power. To do this, we should not marry so young that our mature years will, as it were, seem the same as theirs. For that undesirable condition casts us into many great difficulties. I am thinking of the nobility, whose condition is unlaborious, and who live, as the phrase is, wholly on their revenue. For, with others, the object of whose life is gain, the number and fellowship of children is an advantage for the family:[4] they are so many additional tools and instruments for getting rich.

[1] *Malitieusement opiniastres.* [2] See Plutarch, *Of Avarice.*

[3] No wickedness is justifiable. — Livy, XXVIII, 28.1.

[4] *Car ailleurs, où la vie est questuere, la pluralité et compaignie des enfans, c'est un agencement de mesnage.*

(*b*) I married at thirty-three,[1] and approve the judgement of thirty-five, said to be Aristotle's.[2] (*c*) Plato would have no one marry before thirty; but he has reason to scoff at those who do the works of marriage after fifty-five; and he considers their offspring to be unworthy of sustenance and life.[3] Thales set the truest limits, who, when he was young, replied to his mother, who urged him to marry, that it was not yet time; and having reached maturity, that it was no longer time.[4] We must deny opportunity to every inopportune action. (*a*) The ancient Gauls thought it a matter for extreme blame to have to do with a woman before twenty years of age, and especially urged men who desired to be trained for war to preserve their virginity till well advanced in years; (*b*) because valour is enfeebled and driven away by commerce with women.[5]

> Ma hor congiunto à giovinetta sposa,
> Lieto homai de' figli, era invilito
> Ne gli affetti di padre e di marito.[6]

(*c*) Greek history remarks of Iecus Tarentinus, Chryso, Astylus, Diopompus, and others, that to keep their bodies strong for use in the races of the Olympic games, in wrestling and other exercises, they abstained from any sort of sexual intercourse so long as the need lasted.[7] Muleasses,[8] King of Tunis, he to whom the Emperor Charles V restored his kingdom, upbraided the memory of his father [Mahomet] for his frequentation of women, and called him weak, effeminate, a begetter of children.[9] (*b*) In a certain part of the Spanish Indies, men were not allowed to marry until past forty, and yet girls were permitted to do so at ten

[1] September 23, 1565.

[2] See Aristotle, *Politics*, VII, 16.9. Aristotle says 37.

[3] See Plato, *Republic*, book V.

[4] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Thales;* Plutarch, *Table-Talk*.

[5] See Cæsar, *De Bello Gallico*, VI, 21, where this is said of the Germans.

[6] But now united to a young wife, and happy now in children, the affections of a father and husband had weakened him. — Tasso, *Jerusalem Delivered*, X, 39.

[7] See Plato, *Laws*, book VIII.

[8] Muley-Hassan.

[9] See Paulus Jovius, *History of his own Time*, XXXIII.

years of age.[1] (*a*) When a gentleman is thirty-five years old, it is not time for him to give place to the son who is twenty: he is himself in the way to appear both in expeditions of war and at the court of his Prince; he has need of all he has; and he ought certainly to share his means, but in such wise that he does not forget himself for another. And he may fairly make use of that saying which fathers have commonly at their tongues' end: "I do not choose to undress before going to bed."

But a father weighed down by years and ills, bereft by his weakness and lack of health of common association with men, wrongs himself and his kindred by fruitlessly sitting on a great heap of riches. He is in quite the condition, if he be wise, to desire to undress before going to bed, not quite to his shirt, but to a very warm dressing-gown; the surplusage of luxury [2] of which he has no longer need, he ought readily to bestow on those to whom, in the natural order of things, it should belong. It is reasonable that he should leave to them the use of it, since Nature deprives him of that; otherwise without doubt there is spite and envy. The finest action of the Emperor Charles V was this, in imitation of certain ancients of his calibre — his recognising that reason bids us plainly enough to undress when our clothes burden and impede us; and to go to bed when our legs fail us. He resigned his resources, his grandeur, and his power to his son, when he felt the enfeeblement of his firmness and strength for conducting affairs with the same renown that he had acquired therein.

> Solve senescentem mature sanus equum, ne
> Peccet ad extremum ridendus, et ilia ducat.[3]

This mistake of not being able to recognise betimes, and of not perceiving, the lack of power, and the very great change that age naturally causes both in body and in mind, which in my opinion is equal (if it be not that the mind has more than the half of it),[4] has destroyed the reputation of the

[1] See Lopez de Gomara, *Histoire générale des Indes*, II, 12.

[2] In 1580: *et de ses riches atours.*

[3] Wise betimes, unharness the ageing horse, lest in the end he ridiculously fail and become broken-winded. — Horace, *Epistles*, I, 1.8.

[4] Cf. Book I, chap. 57, pp. 37, 38, *supra.*

larger number of the great men of the world. I have seen and known intimately persons of my time, high in authority, who, it was very easy to see, had wonderfully fallen away from their former ability, of which I knew by the reputation they had thereby gained in their better years. For their honour's sake I could have heartily wished that they had retired comfortably into their houses and been relieved of public and military employments which were no longer for their shoulders. I was at one time familiar in the house of a gentleman, a widower and very old, but yet in a green old age. He had several marriageable daughters and a son already old enough to appear in the world; this burdened his house with many expenses and visits of strangers, in which he took little pleasure, not only because of his desire to save, but even more because, by reason of his age, he had adopted a manner of life very far removed from ours. I said to him one day, somewhat boldly as is my wont,[1] that it would better become him to give place to us and to let his son have his principal house (for there was no other well situated and furnished), and himself retire to a near-by estate of his where no one would disturb his repose, since he could not otherwise avoid our troublesomeness, considering the honour of his children. He followed my advice later and found himself well off.

This does not mean that we thus give them a bond which we can never revoke: I would give them — I, who am in a position to play that part — the enjoyment of my house and of my property, but with liberty to think better of it, if they should give me occasion. I would give them the use thereof because it was no longer needful for me; and I would reserve to myself as much authority in affairs generally as I pleased, having always considered that it must be a great satisfaction to an aged father himself to put his children in the way of managing his affairs; and to be able during his life to overlook their management, supplying them with information and counsel in accordance with his experience of these matters; and himself to entrust the ancient honour and customs of his family to the hands of his successors; and thus to make

[1] The editions of 1580–1588 add: *De produire librement ce qui me vient en la bouche.*

himself responsible for the hopes that he may form of their future conduct. And to this end I should not wish to shun their society, I should wish to observe them closely, and to enjoy, according to the humour of my years, their merriment and their feasts. If I did not live among them (as I might not be able to do without annoying their gatherings by the gloom of my age and the thraldom [1] of my ailments, and without also straining and doing violence to the rules and manner of living which I might then be following), I should wish at least to live near them, in a part of my house, not the finest in appearance,[2] but the most convenient. Not as I saw some years ago a Dean of Saint-Hilaire,[3] at Poitiers, given up to such solitude by the discomfort of his melancholy [4] that, when I entered his chamber, it was twenty-two years that he had not stepped outside the door; and yet his faculties were all unimpaired, save for a rheum that had attacked his stomach. Scarcely once a week would he allow any one to come in to see him; he remained always shut up inside his chamber, alone, save that a servant brought him food once a day, who only went in and came out. His occupation was walking about and reading some book — for he had a certain knowledge of letters; he was persistent in remaining in that course till he died,[5] which he did very soon after.

I would try, by pleasant converse, to keep alive in my children a warm affection and unfeigned good-will toward me, which one easily obtains in a well-dowered nature; for if they are wild beasts, (*c*) of which our time brings forth a harvest, (*a*) we must detest and shun them as such. I dislike the custom (*c*) of forbidding children to employ the paternal appellation and enjoining upon them the use of an unfamiliar title,[6] as being more respectful, Nature not having sufficiently provided for our authority. We call God Almighty Father, and disdain to have our children call us so.

[1] *La subjection.* In 1580, *l'obligation;* in 1588, *l'importunité;* in 1595, *l'obligation.*

[2] *Le plus en parade.*

[3] Jean d'Estissac, died 1576.

[4] In 1580, *santé.*

[5] *Obstiné au demeurant de mourir en cette démarche.*

[6] That is, "monsieur."

I have reformed this fault in my family.[1] It is also injustice and folly (*a*) to deprive children who are grown up of the familiarity of their fathers, and to choose to maintain toward them a harsh and contemptuous austerity, hoping thereby to keep them in fear and obedience. For it is a most futile pretence which makes fathers wearisome to their children, and — what is worse — ridiculous. They possess youth and strength, and consequently gain the fair wind and favour of the world; and they greet with derision these haughty and imperious airs of a man who no longer has any blood in his heart or his veins — just a scarecrow for birds.[2] Even if I could make myself feared, I should still prefer to make myself loved.

(*b*) There are so many shortcomings in old age; so much helplessness; it is so open to contempt, that the best acquisition it can make is the love and affection of kindred; authority and fear are no longer its weapons. I have known a man who in his youth was most imperious. Now that he has come to man's estate, although he lives as judiciously as is possible for him, he strikes, he scolds, he swears, (*c*) the most wrangling master in France; (*b*) he wears himself out with caretaking and vigilance. All this is only an unreal farce,[3] toward which his very family conspires; of the corn-loft, the wine-cellar, aye, and his purse, others have the greater part of the use, while he has the keys in his wallet, dearer to him than his eyes. While he pleases himself with the frugality and niggardliness of his table, all is prodigality in divers corners of his house, merrymaking and extravagance and talk about the tales of his idle wrath and foresight. Every one is like a sentinel in regard to him. If perchance some menial servant attends carefully on him, he is immediately made to his master an object of suspicion; a sentiment which old age so readily conceives of itself. How many times he has boasted to me of the control he had over his household, and of the entire obedience and respect he received from the members of it; how clear-sighted he was about his affairs!

Ille solus nescit omnia.[4]

[1] This sentence appears in 1595, but not in the *Édition Municipale.*
[2] *Vrais espouvantails de cheneviere.* [3] *Un bastelage.*
[4] He alone is in complete ignorance. — Terence, *Adelphi*, IV, 2.9.

I know no man who could show more qualities, both natural and acquired, fitted to maintain authority, than he does; and none the less he has lost it like a child. Therefore I have chosen him among many similar cases that I know as the best example. (*c*) It would be a fit subject for scholastic discussion whether he is better off so, or otherwise. In his presence all things give way to him; this idle effect is permitted to his authority, that they never resist it: they believe him, they fear him, they respect him to his fill. If he dismisses a servant, the man packs his box and is gone — but only out of his sight. The steps of old age are so slow, the senses so dulled, that he will live on and do his work in the same house for a year without being perceived. And when the right time has arrived, letters are made to come from a distance, piteous, imploring, full of promises to do better, by means of which he is restored to favour. Does Monsieur make some bargain or prepare some dispatch which is disapproved? It is suppressed, and later, sufficient reasons are invoked to excuse the lack of performance or of a reply. No letters from outside being brought to him first, he sees only those which seem adapted to his knowledge. If by any chance he gets them into his hands, he is accustomed to rely upon a certain person to read them to him, and the reader instantly finds therein whatever he chooses, and constantly arranges that a person asks his pardon who in the letter insults him. In short, he sees matters only by an image of them planned and arranged, and adapted as much as possible not to arouse his displeasure and his wrath. I have seen, under different forms, many instances of long-continued stable domestic management of exactly similar effect.

(*b*) Women are ever prone to disagree with their husbands. (*c*) They grasp with both hands all pretexts for contending with them; the first excuse serves them for plenary justification. I have known one of them who stole largely from her husband, in order, she told her confessor, to make her alms greater. Let who will believe in that pious arrangement. No managing of affairs seems to them to have enough dignity if it comes from their husbands' concession. They must needs usurp it, either slyly or haughtily, and always

offensively, to give it charm and authority. When, as in the case I have spoken of, (*b*) it is in opposition to a poor old man, and for children, then they seize upon this claim and triumphantly use it for their purpose; (*c*) and, as in a state of common slavery, they easily raise conspiracies against his rule and control. (*b*) If there are male children, grown up and prosperous, they quickly suborn, either by force or favour, both the steward and the keeper of accounts and all the rest. Those who have neither wife nor sons fall into this unfortunate condition less easily, but even more cruelly and undeservingly. (*c*) The elder Cato said in his day, as many servants, so many enemies.[1] Consider, regarding the distance of the innocence of his age from ours, if he did not desire to warn us that wife, son, and servant were so many enemies for us. (*b*) It well belongs to old age to furnish us with the sweet benefit of unperceptiveness and of ignorance and facility in allowing ourselves to be deceived. If we should show anger, how would it be with us, especially in these days, when the judges who have to decide our controversies are commonly partisans of the young and have a personal interest? (*c*) In the event that this trickery should escape my notice, at least it would not escape my notice that I am very easily tricked. And can one ever say enough of the value of a friend, in comparison with these civil social connections? Even the image of friendship that I see in the beasts, so undefiled, with what reverence I regard it! If others trick me, at least I do not trick myself into thinking myself capable of guarding against it, or fret my brain to pay it back. I escape from such trickery in my own circle, not by a restless and rash investigation, but rather by turning aside and by consideration. When I hear talk of the condition of some one, I do not think about him; I turn my eyes directly upon myself, to see how it is with me. Whatever comes near him concerns me. What befalls him gives me counsel and opens my eyes in that direction. Every day and every hour we say of another what we should more fittingly say of ourselves if we could as well turn our reflection within as extend it without. And many authors impair in this way the defence of their cause, going forth rashly to

[1] See Seneca, *Epistle* 47.5.

meet that which they attack, and casting at their enemies shafts fit to be cast back at themselves more advantageously.

(*a*) The late maréchal de Monluc, having lost his son, who died in the Island of Madeira, — a gallant gentleman, in truth, and of great hope, — made very evident to me, among his other regrets, the trouble and anguish he felt for having never opened his heart to him; and from this humour of paternal gravity and crabbedness, having lost the advantage of insight into his son and of knowing him well, and also of showing him the very great affection that he bore him and the true opinion he had of his virtue. "And that poor boy," he said, "never saw aught of me save a stern and disdainful expression, and carried away with him the belief that I could neither love him nor esteem him according to his deserts. For whom did I reserve the knowledge of the peculiar affection which I bore him in my soul? Was it not he who should have had all the pleasure of it and all the obligation? I constrained and stiffened myself to maintain that idle mask; and thereby I lost the pleasure of intercourse with him and at the same time his affection,[1] which can not have been other than very cold toward me as he had never received from me any thing but roughness, or known any other than an authoritative deportment." I think that this lamentation was well founded and reasonable; for, as I know by a too positive experience, there is in the loss of our friends no consolation so sweet as that which is afforded us by the knowledge of having forgotten nothing to say to them, and of having had a perfect and complete communion with them. (*b*) I open my mind to my friends so far as I can; and I signify to them very freely the state of my feeling[2] and my judgement concerning them, as concerning every one. I hasten to set myself forth and shew myself;[3] for I would not that any one mistake about me in any respect whatsoever.

(*a*) Among other customs peculiar to our ancient Gauls was this, as Cæsar tells us: that the [male] children did not appear before their fathers, or venture to be in their company in public, until they began to bear arms, as if it was

[1] *Volontê.* [2] *Volontê.*

[3] *De me produire et de me presenter.*

meant that then was also the time for their fathers to admit them to their familiarity and companionship.[1]

I have observed another sort of bad judgement in some fathers of my day, who are not content with having deprived their children during their long lives of the share that they ought naturally to have of their fortunes, but still leave after them to their wives the same control over all their property, and permission to dispose of it at their pleasure. And I knew a certain nobleman, one of the chief officers of our crown, who had in prospect by right of succession more than fifty thousand crowns a year, who died in want and overwhelmed with debts at past fifty years, his mother in her extreme old age still enjoying all his property by the disposition of the father, who for his part had lived near eighty years. This seems to me in no wise reasonable. (*b*) Therefore I think it of small advantage to a man whose affairs are in good order to seek a wife who burdens him with an ample dowry; there is no outside debt which brings more disaster to families; my predecessors have commonly avoided that course very fitly, and I also. (*c*) But they who advise us against rich wives, for fear lest they may be less tractable and grateful, mistake in losing a real benefit for so worthless an assumption. It costs an unreasonable woman no more to pass over one consideration than another; they have the best conceit of themselves when they are most in the wrong; injustice allures them, as good women are allured by the honour of their virtuous actions; and they are the more affable,[2] the richer they are; as more willingly and vaingloriously chaste because they are beautiful.

(*a*) It is reasonable to leave the administration of affairs to mothers while the children are not of the legal age to carry the burden; but the father has brought them up very ill if he can not hope that at that age they will have more wisdom and ability than his wife, considering the usual weakness of the sex. Yet it would be, in truth, more contrary to nature to make mothers dependent upon the judgement of their children. We should give them amply the wherewithal to maintain their position according to the state of their family

[1] See Cæsar, *De Bello Gallico*, VI, 18.

[2] *Debonnaires.*

and of their years, because necessity and indigence are much more unsuitable and harder to endure for them than for men. The children should rather be burdened therewith than the mother. (*c*) Generally speaking, the most sensible distribution of our riches at death is, it seems to me, to let them be distributed according to the custom of the country. The laws have given better thought to it than we; and it is better to let them mistake in their choice than rashly to run the risk of mistaking in ours. Our wealth does not properly belong to us, since, by civil decree and independently of us,[1] it is ordained to certain successors. And, although we have some outside liberty, I hold that it needs a great and very manifest cause to make us take from any one what fortune bestowed upon him, and what common justice summoned him to receive; and that it is an unreasonable abuse of this liberty to make it serve our frivolous private desires.

My fate has favoured me in not offering me occasions which could tempt me and divert my affection from the common and lawful ordering of things. I know persons with whom it is time lost to spend long pains in good offices; a word taken amiss effaces the merit of ten years. Fortunate is he who finds himself able to smooth the way for their will at this last passing![2] The latest action carries the day; not the greatest and most frequent services, but the most recent and immediate, do the work. There are people who amuse themselves with their testaments as with apples or rods, to reward or punish every act of those who claim an interest therein. It is a matter of too far-reaching consequence and of too much importance to be thus shifted about every moment, and one in which wise men establish their position once for all, having regard to reason and public custom. We have a little too much at heart these masculine substitutions. And we purpose a ridiculous eternity to our names. We give too much weight also to the idle conjectures about the future that are suggested to us by youthful minds. It would have been an injustice, perhaps, to displace me from my rank because I was more heavy and dull, more slow and

[1] *Sans nous;* that is, if we make no disposition of it.

[2] *Heureux qui se trouve à point pour leur oindre la volontê sur ce dernier passage!*

uninterested in my lesson, not only than all my brothers, but than all the children of my province, whether the lesson were of mental or of bodily exercise. It is foolish to make special selections on the faith of these presages by which we are so often deceived. If we can set aside the usual prescription, and correct the destinies in the choice that they have made of our heirs, we can do it with more show of justice in consideration of some marked and excessive bodily deformity, which is a persistent, incurable blemish, and to us, great esteemers of beauty,[1] an important misfortune.

The animated dialogue between Plato's legislator and his fellow citizens will shed lustre on [2] this passage. "What, then," said they, feeling their end draw near, "shall we not dispose of what is ours to whomsoever we please? Ye Gods, how cruel, that according as our friends have been of use to us in our sicknesses, in our old age, in our business, we are not at liberty to give them more or less, according to our desire!" To which the legislator replies in this wise: "My friends, who must doubtless die very soon, it is difficult for you both to know yourselves and to know what belongs to you according to the Delphic inscription. I, who make the laws, hold that neither do you belong to yourselves, nor does that which you enjoy belong to you. Both your possessions and you belong to your family, past as well as future. But even more do both your family and your possessions belong to the public. Wherefore, lest some flatterer, in your old age or in your sickness, or some inclination unsuitably urges you to make an unjust testament, I will save you from doing so. But, having regard both to the interest of the city and to that of your family, I will establish laws and will make it obvious, as being reasonable, that the individual advantage must give way to the general advantage. Depart with gentle and kindly feelings, where human necessity calls you. It is for me, who do not regard one thing more than another, who, in so far as I can, provide for the general interest, to take care of what you leave." [3]

Returning to my subject, (*a*) it seems to me, I know not

[1] Cf. Book II, chap. 17, *infra.*

[2] *Fera honneur à.*

[3] See Plato, *Laws*, book XI.

why, that in every form predominance over men, save when maternal and natural, is in no wise the due of women, unless it be for the punishment of those who, from some unsoundness of judgement, have voluntarily submitted to them; but this does not at all concern the old women of whom we are now speaking. It is the apparent truth of this consideration that caused us to invent, and so readily give footing to, this law, which no man ever saw, which deprives females of the succession to our crown; [1] and there is hardly any lordship where it is not alleged, as here, by an air of reasonableness which justifies it; but fortune has given it more credit in certain places than in others. It is dangerous to leave to their judgement the disposing of our succession according to the choice they may make among their children, which is often partial and capricious. For the disordered appetite and morbid taste that they have during their pregnancies they have in their hearts at all times. Usually we see them dote upon the weakest and most miserable, or upon those, if they have them, who are still hanging round their neck. For, not having sufficient strength of judgement to select and embrace that which so deserves, they more easily let themselves go where the impulses of nature are more single, like the animals, which have knowledge of their young only while they are at the breast. Moreover, it is easy to see by experience that this natural affection, to which we give so much authority, has very weak roots. For a very moderate gain, we daily tear their own children from the arms of mothers and make them take ours into their care; we make them abandon their own to some needy nurse, to whom we would not entrust ours, or to a she-goat; forbidding the mothers, not only to nurse them, whatever danger the little ones may incur thereby, but even to have any thing to do with them, that they may devote themselves wholly to the service of our children. And we see in most of them that there is very soon born, through familiarity, a bastard affection more earnest than the natural kind, and greater solicitude for the welfare of children not their own than of their own. And I have spoken about she-goats because it is a common thing in my neighbourhood to see the village women, when they

[1] The Salic Law.

can not nurse children at the breast, call she-goats to their assistance; and I have at this moment two lackeys who were suckled on woman's milk but eight days. These goats are quickly trained to go to these little children, to give them suck; they recognise their voices when they cry, and run to them; if you bring to them another than their nurseling, they reject it; and the child does the same with a strange goat. I saw a child the other day whose goat had just been taken from him because his father had only borrowed her from a neighbour; he would never suck another one that they brought to him, and he died, doubtless of hunger. Beasts change and corrupt natural affection as easily as we do.

(*c*) I believe that in what Herodotus narrates of a certain region of Libya there are often mistakes: he says that the men cohabit with women indiscriminately, but that the child, when he is able to walk, finds his father in him to whom, amid the throng, natural instinct guides his first steps.[1]

(*a*) Now, if we consider this simple reason for loving our children, that we have engendered them, wherefore we call them our other selves,[2] it seems that we bring forth another product which may not be of less value; for what we engender with the mind, the progeny of our intellect, of our disposition and knowledge,[3] are products of a more noble part than the corporeal and are more our own; we are both father and mother in this generation. They cost us much dearer and bring us greater honour, if they have any goodness in them; for the worthiness of our other children is much more theirs than ours; the share that we have in it is very slight; but of these all the beauty, all the charm and value are ours. Thus they resemble us and represent us much more vividly than do the others. (*c*) Plato adds that these are immortal children who immortalise their fathers, aye, and deify them, like Lycurgus, Solon, Minos.[4] (*a*) Now, histories being full

[1] See Herodotus, IV, 180: "The children . . . are assigned to those whom they most resemble." (Rawlinson's translation.) Montaigne's source is Saliat's French translation.

[2] In 1580–1588: *chair de nostre chair et os de nos os.*

[3] *Les enfantements de nostre esprit, de nostre courage et suffisance.*

[4] See Plato, *Phædrus.* Plato has Darius instead of Minos.

of examples of the common regard of fathers for their children, it has seemed to me not amiss for me to cull also an example of this other sort of regard. (*c*) Heliodorus, that good Bishop of Tricea,[1] preferred to relinquish the dignity, the profit, the reverence of so honourable a prelateship, rather than give up his daughter [2] — a daughter who still is very charming, but perchance a little too carefully and wantonly trimmed up [3] for an ecclesiastic and sacerdotal daughter, and of too amorous a nature. (*a*) There was one Labienus at Rome, a personage of great worth and authority, and, among other qualities, excellent in every sort of literature, who was, so I believe, son to that great Labienus, the foremost of the captains who served under Cæsar in the Gallic War, and who afterward, having gone over to the party of Pompey the Great, carried himself so valiantly until Cæsar defeated him in Spain. This Labienus of whom I am speaking had several enviers of his virtue, and, as is natural, the courtiers and favourites of the emperors of his day were foes of his outspokenness and of the inherited sentiments [4] that he yet retained against tyranny, with which it may be believed he coloured his writings and his books. His adversaries prosecuted him before the magistrate at Rome, and succeeded in having several works of his, which he had given to the world, condemned to be burned. It was with him that this new sort of penalty began, that was afterward repeated at Rome with regard to many others, to punish even writings and studies with death. There would not be enough occasion and material for cruelty, did we not intermingle things which nature has made immune from all feeling and all suffering, like renown and the conceptions of our minds; and did we not bestow material injuries on the teachings and monuments of the Muses. Now Labienus could not bear this loss, nor to survive his so beloved progeny; he had himself taken to, and shut up alive in, the tomb of his ancestors, where he arranged for killing and burying himself at one stroke. It would be difficult to show a more vehement

[1] Tricca. See Nicephorus Callistus, *Ecclesiastical History*.

[2] That is, his book, Αἰθιόπικα, commonly known as *Theagenes and Chariclea*.

[3] *Goderonnée* = beruffled.

[4] *Des humeurs paternelles*.

paternal affection than that. Cassius Severus, a most eloquent man and his familiar friend, seeing his books burn, cried out that by the same sentence he too should have been condemned to be burned alive at the same time; for he cherished and preserved in his memory what they contained.[1] (*b*) A similar catastrophe befell Greuntius Cordus, accused of having praised in his books Brutus and Cassius. That despicable, servile, and corrupt Senate, which deserved a worse master than Tiberius, condemned his writings to the flames; he was pleased to bear them company in their death, and killed himself by abstaining from food.[2] (*a*) The good Lucan, being sentenced to death by that wretch Nero, in the last moment of his life, when more than half his blood had already flowed out from the veins of his arms, which he had made his doctor open that he might die; and when coldness had seized his extremities and had begun to reach the vital organs, the last thing that he had in his memory was some of the lines of his book on the Pharsalian war, which he recited; and he died, having those words last on his lips.[3] What was this but a loving and fatherly farewell which he was taking of his children, resembling the adieux and close embraces that we give to our own when dying, and a result of that natural disposition which brings to our remembrance at that supreme moment the things that we have held dearest during our lives?

Can we believe that Epicurus, who, when dying in torment, as he says, from the extreme pain of the stone, found his only solace in the beauty of the doctrine that he left to the world, would have derived as much satisfaction from a number of well-born and well-bred children, if he had had them, as he did from the production of his valuable writings? and that, if it had been in his choice to leave behind him a misshapen and ill-born child or a foolish and useless book, he would not have chosen — and not he alone, but every man of like intelligence — to incur the first misfortune rather than the other?[4] It would be, peradventure, impiety

[1] See Seneca, *Controversia.*
[2] See Tacitus, *Annals*, IV, 34. His name was Cremutius Cordus.
[3] See *Ibid.*, XV, 70.
[4] See Diogenes Laertius, *Epicurus;* Cicero, *De Fin.*, II, 35.

in St. Augustine, for example, if it were proposed to him, on the one hand, to bury his writings, from which our religion receives such great benefit, or to bury his children, in case he had any, if he did not prefer to bury his children. (*b*) And I know not if I should not much prefer to have produced a child perfectly well made, by commerce with the Muses, rather than by commerce with my wife.

(*c*) To this book such as it is, what I give, I give absolutely and irrevocably, as we give to children of the body; the little service that I have done it is no longer at my disposal; it may know many things that I no longer know, and may hold through me what I have not retained and what it would be necessary that, like any stranger, I should borrow from it if I were in need. If I am wiser than it, it is richer than I. (*a*) There are few men, lovers of poetry, who would not be more gratified by being fathers of the *Æneid* than of the finest boy in Rome,[1] and who would not more easily endure the one loss than the other. (*c*) For, according to Aristotle, of all workmen, the poet especially is the most in love with his work.[2] (*a*) It is not easy to believe that Epaminondas, who boasted of leaving no other posterity than daughters who would one day do honour to their father (they were the two noble victories [3] that he had won over the Lacedæmonians), would willingly have consented to exchange these for the most magnificent maidens in all Greece; [4] or that Alexander and Cæsar would ever have desired to be deprived of the grandeur of their glorious deeds of war for the pleasure of having children and heirs, however perfect and complete they might have been. Indeed, I much doubt whether Phidias, or any other excellent sculptor, would care as much for the preservation and length of days of his natural children as he would for an excellent statue, which, by dint of long toil and study, he had perfected according to art. And as for those vicious and frenzied passions which have sometimes inflamed fathers with love of their daughters, and mothers of their sons, the like is

[1] In 1580–1588: *de France*.

[2] See Aristotle, *Ethics*, IX, 7.

[3] Leuctra and Mantinea.

[4] See Diodorus Siculus, XV, 23. Cornelius Nepos (*Epaminondas*) mentions but one "daughter."

found in this other sort of parenthood: witness what is related of Pygmalion, who, having carved the statue of a woman of singular beauty, became so desperately possessed by frantic passion for this work of his, that it must needs be that the gods, indulgent to his madness, should give it life for him.

> Tentatum mollescit ebur, positoque rigore
> Subsidit digitis.[1]

CHAPTER IX

OF THE ARMOUR OF THE PARTHIANS

This is an Essay much overlooked, little noticed usually by the readers and critics of Montaigne; and yet it has its peculiar importance as confirming the impression received from other Essays, and from scattered, much-disregarded passages, of Montaigne's strong personal interest in military matters, in the things belonging to the life and conditions of a soldier. It shows that, when reading the Roman historians, his attention was attracted by their descriptions of the arms of the Romans and of those of the nations which they subjected; and that his own knowledge of the arms and armour in use by his countrymen and contemporaries — and, it may be believed, by himself — greatly stimulated his curiosity in the comparison of bodily means of defence in different ages and countries.

It is an Essay markedly characteristic of Montaigne's peculiar power of blending the past with the present; of rendering the past as vivid, as intelligible, as the present, the present as full of instruction as the past.

IT is a bad habit of the nobility of our time, and very unmanly, to put on their armour only at the instant of extreme need, and to lay it off again as soon as there is the slightest indication that the danger has disappeared. Whence ensue many disorders. For, with every one shouting and rushing to his arms at the moment of the charge, some are still lacing their cuirasses when their comrades are already routed. Our fathers gave their helmets, their lances, their gauntlets to be carried, and did not put off the rest of their equipment so long as the business was

[1] The ivory softens at his touch, and loses its hardness, and yields to his fingers. — Ovid, *Metam.*, X, 283.

unfinished. Our troops are nowadays greatly perplexed and disordered by the confusion of the baggage and the camp-servants, who can not leave their masters because of their arms.[1] (*c*) Livy, speaking of our people, says: *Intolerantissima laboris corpora vix arma humeris gerebant.*[2] (*a*) Many nations still go, and used to go in ancient times, to war without protection for their body, or they protected themselves with useless safeguards,

(*b*) Tegmina queis capitum raptus de subere cortex.[3]

Alexander, the most venturesome captain who ever lived, very rarely wore armour.[4] (*a*) And those among us who despise it do not, for that, have much the worse bargain. If we see some men killed for lack of harness, there is a hardly smaller number to whom the embarrassment of their armour has been fatal, they being imprisoned by its weight, or bruised and broken, either by an untimely stroke or otherwise. For, in truth, it seems, considering the heaviness of our armour and its thickness, that we seek only to defend ourselves, and are more burdened than protected. We have enough to do to sustain the load of it, being fettered and constrained, as if we were to fight only with the shock of our armour, and as if we were not as much obliged to protect it as it is to protect us. (*b*) Tacitus depicts amusingly the warriors of our Gallic ancestors, so armed as only to support themselves, having no way of wounding or being wounded, or of rising when overthrown.[5] Lucullus, seeing that certain Median men-at-arms, who formed the front rank of the army of Tigranes, were heavily and awkwardly armed, as in an iron prison, thence judged that he could easily defeat them, and with them began his attack and his victory.[6] (*a*) And now that our musketeers are in good repute, I think that we shall invent some means of immuring our-

[1] That is, because they (the servants) are carrying their arms.

[2] Most intolerant of fatigue, their bodies could hardly carry their arms upon their shoulders. — Livy, XXVII, 48.

[3] The covering of their heads being bark torn from the cork tree. — Virgil, *Æneid*, VII, 742.

[4] See Quintus Curtius, IX, 6, and IV, 13.

[5] See Tacitus, *Annals*, III, 43, 46.

[6] See Plutarch, *Life of Lucullus*.

selves to protect ourselves from them, and be carried to war shut up in fortresses like those that the ancients had drawn by their elephants.

This humour is far removed from that of the younger Scipio, who sharply reproved his soldiers because they had scattered caltrops under the water in that part of the moat by which the defenders of the city he was besieging might make sorties against him; saying that assailants should think of attacking, not of dreading danger; (*c*) and he feared, with good reason, that this expedient might lull to sleep their vigilance in keeping guard.[1] (*b*) He said also to a young man who displayed to him his fine buckler: "It is fine indeed, my son; but a Roman soldier should have more trust in his right hand than in his left." [2]

(*a*) Now it is only unaccustomedness which makes the burden of our arms intolerable to us.

> L'husbergo in dosso haveano, e l'elmo in testa,
> Dui di quelli guerrier, de i quali io canto.
> Ne notte o di, doppo ch'entraro in questa
> Stanza, gli haveano mai mesi da canto,
> Che facile a portar come la vesta
> Era lor, perche in uso l'havean tanto.[3]

(*c*) The Emperor Caracalla marched everywhere completely armed, on foot, leading his army.[4] (*a*) The Roman infantry bore not only the morion, the sword, and the shield (for as to armour, says Cicero, they were so accustomed to have it on their backs, that it impeded them no more than did their limbs; [*c*] *arma enim membra milites esse dicunt* [5]); but also, at the same time, the provisions that they needed for fifteen days, and a certain number of stakes for making their ram-

[1] See Plutarch, *Apothegms of Kings*, etc.; Valerius Maximus, III, 7.2.

[2] See Plutarch, *Apothegms of Kings*, etc.

[3] Two of these warriors of whom I sing had their corselet on the back and their helmet on the head; neither by night nor day had they laid them aside since they entered their abode; for it was as easy to them to wear these as their garments, such constant use they had of them. — Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, XII, 30.

[4] See Xiphilin, *Life of Caracalla.*

[5] For arms, they say, are a soldier's limbs. — Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, II, 16.

parts, (*b*) up to sixty pounds weight. And the soldiers of Marius, thus laden, were trained to do five leagues in five hours, and six, if there were haste. (*a*) Their military discipline was much more rigorous than ours; likewise, it produced very different results. This jest is admirable in this connection: that a Lacedæmonian soldier was blamed because, being on an expedition of war, he had been seen under the shelter of a house. They were so hardened by toil that it was a disgrace to be seen under any other roof than that of the sky, whatever might be the weather. (*c*) The younger Scipio, when re-forming his army in Spain, ordered his soldiers always to eat standing, and to eat nothing that was cooked.[1] (*a*) We should not carry our people far at that price.

For the rest, Marcellinus, a man brought up in the Roman wars, carefully observes the manner the Parthians had of arming themselves, and observes it as being very different from the Roman.[2] They had, he said, armour woven in the fashion of little feathers, which did not prevent the movement of their bodies; and yet it was so strong, that our darts rebounded when they struck it (these are the scales [3] which our ancestors were much accustomed to employ). And, in another place, he says that their horses were strong and able [4] and covered with thick leather; and they themselves were armed from head to foot with great plates of iron, arranged so skilfully that at the joints of the limbs they lent themselves to the motion. You would have said they were men of iron; for they wore head-coverings so exactly fitted, and so closely imitating the shape and features of the face, that there was no way to wound them save through the little round hole which corresponded with the eyes, giving them a

[1] See Plutarch, *Apothegms of Kings*, etc.

[2] In 1580 to 1588: *Or par ce qu'elle me semble bien fort approchante de la nostre, j'ay voulu retirer ce passage de son autheur, ayant pris autresfois la peine de dire bien amplement, ce que je sçavois sur la comparaison de nos armes aux armes romaines; mais ce lopin de mes brouillards m'ayant este desrobé avec plusieurs autres, par un homme qui me servoit, je ne le priverai point du profit qu'il en espere faire; aussi me seroit-il bien malaisé de remascher deux fois une mesme viande.*

[3] That is, mail-coats.

[4] *Roides.*

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little light, or through the slits at the place of the nostrils, through which they breathed with difficulty.[1]

(*b*) Flexilis inductis animatur lamina membris,
Horribilis visu; credas simulacra moveri
Ferrea, cognatoque viros spirare metallo.
Par vestitus equis: ferrata fronte minantur,
Ferratosque movent, securi vulneris, armos.[2]

(*a*) There is a description which much resembles the equipment of a French man-at-arms, with all his bards. Plutarch says that Demetrius had had made for himself and for Alcinus, the chief warrior near him, a complete harness weighing a hundred and twenty pounds, whereas the ordinary ones weighed but sixty.[3]

CHAPTER X

OF BOOKS

Of this long and delightful Essay there is little to be said. It is perhaps the one that would best introduce the general reader to Montaigne. It has nothing of his deepest and most original quality of thought, but it is entirely charming in the easy flow of its admirable literary criticisms, made doubly interesting by their personal note. As Montaigne says of Terence, so may we say of Montaigne: "I can not read him so often that I do not find in him some new beauty and charm."

Monsieur Villey has pointed out a singular and important *lapsus calami*, which, very strangely, has not before been noted. It is unquestionable that it was Seneca who in Montaigne's eyes was the most *uniforme et constant*, Plutarch more *ondoyans et divers*.

I HAVE no doubt that it often happens that I speak of matters which are elsewhere better treated of by the masters of the art, and more correctly. Here is simply the testing[4] of my natural faculties and in no wise of acquired ones; and he who shall detect me in ignorance will accomplish nothing against me, for I shall hardly answer to

[1] See Ammianus Marcellinus, XXIV, 7, XXV, 1.

[2] The flexible mail is animated by the limbs it covers, a horrible sight; you would think iron images were moving, and men of metal breathing. The horses are clad in like manner: their iron heads threaten, and safe from wounds, they move iron flanks. — Claudian, *In Ruffinum*, II, 358.

[3] See Plutarch, *Life of Demetrius*.

[4] *L'essay*.

another for my opinions[1] — I who never answer for them to myself, nor am ever satisfied with them. He who may seek knowledge from them, let him fish for it where it abides; there is nothing of which I make less profession. These are my imaginings, whereby I do not attempt to make known things, but myself; they will perchance be known to me one day, or have been so at other times, according as chance has carried me to places where they have been made manifest. But I remember them no longer. (*c*) And if I am a man of some reading, I am a man of no retention. (*a*) And so I can promise nothing with certainty, save to make known[2] to what point the knowledge that I have of them reaches at this moment. Let not attention be paid to the subject, but to the shape I give to it. (*c*) Let it be observed whether in what I borrow[3] I have been able to select what will heighten or fitly strengthen the conception, which is always my own. For I make others say, not before me but after me,[4] what I can not say so well myself, from the weakness of my language or from the weakness of my thought.[5] I do not count my borrowings, I weigh them; and if I had desired to give value to them by number, I should have loaded myself with twice as many. They are all, or very nearly all, from names so famous and so ancient, that they seem to me to name themselves sufficiently without me. As for opinions, comparisons, arguments, if I transplant some of those into my fields and mingle them with my own, I have purposely concealed the author, thereby to hold in check the temerity of those hasty judgements which fall upon every sort of writing, especially the recent writings of men still living and in the vulgar tongue,[6] which permits all the world to talk of them and seems to prove the conception and the design to be vulgar, also. I would have them give Plutarch a fillip on my nose, and

[1] *De mes discours.*

[2] In 1580 to 1588: *ce que je pense.* "Excutienda damus præcordia" (Persius, *Satires*, V, 20). The quotation was placed here in 1588, but in 1595 was transferred to the essay, *De la Vanité*, Book III, chap. 9.

[3] Cf. Book I, chap. 26 (Vol. I, p. 196), and chap. 40 (Vol. I, p. 332).

[4] *Non à ma teste, mais à ma suite* (not in *Édition Municipale*).

[5] *De mon sens.*

[6] That is, not in Latin.

excite themselves to insult Seneca in me. It is needful to hide my weakness under these great reputations. I shall love any one who is able to unplume me, I mean by clarity of judgement and solely by discrimination of the strength and beauty of the thought. For I who, through lack of memory, often fail to pick them out with recognition of their origin, can yet very well know, by measuring my own capacity, that my soil is in no wise capable of producing any of the more precious flowers I find sown there, and that all the fruits of my own growing would not be worth them.

(*a*) If I encumber myself; if there be emptiness and imperfection in my discourse, which I do not at all perceive, or which I may not be capable of perceiving when put before me, for this I am responsible. For mistakes often escape our eyes, but infirmity of judgement consists in not being able to discern them when another points them out to us. Learning and truth may have their abode in us without good judgement, and so may good judgement be there without them; indeed, the recognition of ignorance is one of the best and surest proofs of good judgement that I know. I have no other drill-master[1] than chance, to arrange my writings.[2] As my thoughts present themselves to my mind, I bring them together; sometimes they come in a crowd, sometimes they drag along in single file. I desire my natural and usual pace to be seen, irregular as it is. I let myself wander wherever I find myself; besides, these are in no wise matters which it is not permissible to be ignorant of, and to speak of casually and at random. I should much like to have a more perfect apprehension of things, but I do not choose to pay so high a price as it costs. My purpose is to pass quietly and not laboriously what remains to me of life. There is nothing I care to weary my brains about, not even learning, however great its value. In books I seek only to give myself pleasure by worthy entertainment; or, if I study, I then seek only the learning which treats of the knowledge of myself and which instructs me how to die well and to live well.

(*b*) Has meus ad metas sudet oportet equus.[3]

[1] *Sergent de bande.* [2] *Mes pieces.*

[3] This is the goal toward which my horse should strain. — Propertius, IV, 1.70.

(*a*) If I meet with any difficulties, I do not bite my nails over them; I give them up, after attacking them once or twice. (*b*) If I sat down to them, I should waste myself and my time; for I have a nimble [1] wit. What I do not see at the first attack I see even less by persisting about it. I do nothing without animation; and continuation and too earnest effort confuse my judgement, dispirit and weary it. (*c*) My sight is thereby blurred and bewildered. (*b*) I must needs withdraw it and then again suddenly look;[2] just as, to judge of the brilliancy of scarlet, we are told to pass the eye over it, glancing at it from several points of view changed rapidly and repeatedly. (*a*) If this book wearies me, I take up another; and I give myself to it only at times when the irksomeness of doing nothing begins to lay hold upon me. I care little for new books because the old ones seem to me fuller and stronger; nor for those in Greek, because my judgement can not do its work with imperfect and unskilled comprehension.[3]

Among books merely agreeable, I find, of modern ones, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Rabelais, and the *Basia* of Johannes Secundus (if we may place this last in that category [4]), worth reading for entertainment. As for *Amadis*, and other works of the like kind, they were not able to interest even my childhood. I will say this further, if audaciously and indiscreetly, that this old dull mind can no longer be pleased either by Ariosto or even by good Ovid; his facility and his imagination, which enchanted me formerly, scarcely retain my attention to-day. I utter freely my opinion about all things, yea, and about those which, perchance, exceed my capacity, and which I in no wise hold to be within my jurisdiction. And by what I opine about them, I make evident the measure of my vision, not the

[1] *Primsautier.*

[2] *Et que je l'y remette à secousses.*

[3] *D'une puerile et aprantise intelligence.* In 1580 to 1588: *par ce que mon jugement ne se satisfaict pas d'une moyenne intelligence.*

[4] That is, in the category of "modern" ones, though the *Basia* are written in Latin, *moderne* signifying written in French. This clause of 1580 to 1588 is here omitted: *et des siecles un peu dessus du nostre, l'histoire Æthiopique.*

measure of the things.[1] If I find myself without any relish for Plato's *Axiochus*,[2] as a work lacking in strength, my judgement does not trust itself about this in regard to such an author; it is not so arrogant as to oppose itself to the authority of so many other (*c*) famous ancient judgements, which it regards as its teachers and masters, and with which it is content rather to mistake.[3] (*a*) It blames itself and condemns itself, either as stopping at the surface, being unable to penetrate to the bottom, or as looking at the thing in some false light. It is content with simply securing itself from confusion and disorder; as for its weakness, it readily recognises and avows that. It studies to give a true interpretation to the perceptions that its apprehension presents to it; but they are feeble and imperfect. The greater number of Æsop's fables have several meanings and significations. Those who expound their symbolism[4] select some aspect which squares with the fables; but, for the most part, it is only the first and superficial aspect; there are others more full of life, more essential and inherent, to which they have not been able to penetrate; behold, it is so with me.

But, to pursue my path, it has always seemed to me that in poetry, Virgil, Lucretius, Catullus, and Horace hold by very far the first rank; and, markedly, Virgil in his *Georgics*, which I esteem the most finished work of all poetry; in comparison with which we can easily see that there are passages of the *Æneid* which the author would have more carefully smoothed,[5] had he had leisure to do so. (*b*) And the fifth book of the *Æneid* seems to me the most perfect. (*a*) I like Lucan, too, and willingly frequent him; not so much for his style, as for his proper worth and the truth of his opinions and judgements. As for good Terence, [who embodies] the delicacy and the graces of the Latin tongue, I find him admirable in representing to the life the motions of the soul

[1] In 1580 to 1588: *Ce que j'en opine, ce n'est pas aussi pour etablir la grandeur et mesure des choses, mais pour faire connoistre la mesure et force de ma veue.*

[2] Not usually attributed to Plato.

[3] In 1580 to 1588: *Autres meilleurs jugemens, ny ne se donne temerairement la loy de les pouvoir accuser.*

[4] *Ceux qui les mythologisent.*

[5] *Eut donnē encore quelque tour de pigne.*

and the state of our morals and manners; (*c*) every hour our actions send me back to him. (*a*) I can not read him so often that I do not find in him some new beauty and charm.[1] They who lived a little later than Virgil objected because some compared Lucretius to him. I am of opinion that it is, in truth, an unfair comparison; but I have much ado in confirming myself in this belief when I find myself occupied by one of the fine passages in Lucretius. If they were nettled by this comparison, what would they have said of the ignorant folly[2] and stupidity of those who nowadays compare Ariosto to him? And what would Ariosto himself say of it?

O seclum insapiens et infacetum![3]

I think that the ancients have even more reason to blame those who compared Plautus with Terence — the latter is much more the gentleman — than [the comparison of] Lucretius with Virgil. (*c*) It counts much in the estimation and preference of Terence that the father of Roman eloquence[4] has him alone of his rank so often on his lips, and the sentence which the foremost judge among Roman poets passes on his comrade.[5]

(*a*) It has often been in my thoughts, how, in our times, they who take it upon them to write plays (like the Italians, who are very successful in that) employ three or four plots of Terence or Plautus, to make from them one of their own. They crowd into a single play five or six of Boccaccio's tales. What makes them thus overburden themselves with matter is the doubt they have of being able to sustain themselves by their own graces; they must needs find a body on which to lean; and not having enough of their own wit with which to interest us, they want the plot to entertain us. It is quite otherwise with my author: the perfections and beauties o his manner of expression make us lose the longing for his

[1] Cf. what Montaigne says of Terence near the beginning of chap. 40 of Book I (Vol. I, p. 330).

[2] *Bestise barbaresque.*

[3] O senseless and ignorant age! — Catullus, XLIII, 8.

[4] Cicero. Cf. Book II, chap. 31, *infra: Que Cicero, père d'eloquence*, etc.

[5] Horace on Plautus. See the *Ars Poetica*, 270.

subject; his gracefulness and delicacy detain us everywhere; he is everywhere so delightful, —

liquidus puroque simillimus amni,[1] —

and so fills our minds with his charms that we forget those of his fable. This same consideration carries me further: I see that the good ancient poets avoided the affectation and the questing, not only of the fantastic flights of the Spaniards and the Petrarchians, but even of the gentler and more restrained touches[2] which are the ornament of all the poetic works of succeeding ages. Yet is there no good judge who finds them lacking in these ancients, and who does not admire incomparably more the smooth polish and the never-failing sweetness and blooming beauty of Catullus's epigrams than all the stings with which Martial sharpens the tails of his. It is for that same reason that I gave but now, as Martial says of himself: *minus illi ingenio laborandum fuit, in cujus locum materia successerat.*[3] Those earlier writers, without exciting and spurring themselves on, are effective enough: they find matter for laughter everywhere; they need not tickle themselves. The later ones require alien aid; in proportion as they have less spirit, they need more body. (*b*) They ride on horseback because they are not strong on their legs. (*a*) Just as, at our balls, those men of low degree who teach dancing seek to gain praise by turning somersaults and other odd and tumbler-like antics because they can not imitate the bearing and demeanour of our nobility. (*b*) And ladies gain less by their carriage in dances where there are various irregularities and movements of the body, than in certain other ceremonious dances, where they have only to walk at their natural gait and display a simple manner and their wonted grace. (*a*) And while I have seen accomplished clowns, dressed in their everyday clothes and with their usual bearing, give us all the pleasure that can be derived from their art, beginners who are not so highly trained need to beflour their faces, disguise themselves, and

[1] Flowing, and like a pure stream. — Horace, *Epistles*, II, 2.120.

[2] *Pointes.*

[3] He little needed to work his wits; the subject took the place of them. — Martial, Preface to book VIII.

counterfeit wild gestures and grimaces, to induce us to laugh. This conception of mine is more demonstrable than anywhere else in the comparison between the *Æneid* and the *Furioso:* the one we see on swift wing flying high and strong and always following its course; the other fluttering and hopping from tale to tale as from twig to twig, trusting to its wings only for a very short flight, and constantly alighting, for fear lest breath and strength fail;

Excursusque breves tentat.[1]

These then are the authors who, as regards subjects of this kind, delight me most. As for my other reading, which mingles a little more profit with pleasure, from which I learn to order my humours and my moods, the books that serve me therein are Plutarch, since he has been French,[2] and Seneca. They have both this marked suitableness for my humour, that the knowledge which I seek in them is treated in disconnected works, which do not require the bondage of long-continued attention, of which I am incapable: such are the minor works of Plutarch, and the letters of Seneca, which are the best part of their writings and the most profitable. It is no great adventure to take them in hand; and I leave them when I please. For they have no connection and dependence one with another. These authors agree together in the greater number of useful and true opinions; as also their fortunes caused them to be born at about the same period, both of them to be tutors to Roman emperors,[3] both to come from foreign lands, both to be rich and powerful. Their teaching is the cream of philosophy, and is presented [4] in a simple and pertinent fashion. Plutarch is more uniform and steady; Seneca more wavering and variable.[5] He takes great pains, and bends and strains himself to arm virtue against weakness, fear, and evil appetites; the other seems not to rate their power so high, and to disdain to quicken his pace and put himself on guard. Plutarch's opinions are

[1] He attempts only short flights. — Virgil, *Georgics*, IV, 194.

[2] That is, since Amyot translated him.

[3] Plutarch to Hadrian, Seneca to Nero.

[4] In 1580 to 1588: *Leurs creances sont des meilleures de toute la philosophie, et traictées.*

[5] *Plus ondoyant et divers.* See Miss Norton's Introduction, p. 134, *sup.*

platonic, mild, and adaptable to civil society; those of the other are stoical and epicurean, further removed from common usage, but in my judgement more useful for the individual and more solid. It is visible that Seneca leans a little toward the tyranny of the emperors of his time; for I hold it certain that it is against his own judgement that he condemns the cause of the noble-hearted murderers of Cæsar.[1] Plutarch is everywhere unconstrained. Seneca is full of wit and sallies; Plutarch of substance. The former excites you more and moves you; the latter satisfies you more and pays you better. (*b*) He guides us, the other pushes us on.

(*a*) As for Cicero, the works of his which best serve my turn are those which treat of philosophy, and especially of moral philosophy. But to confess the truth boldly (for when one has leaped the barriers of audacity, there is no longer any curb), his manner of writing, and every other like manner, seems to me irksome. For his preambles, definitions, divisions, and etymologies use up the greater part of his work; what there is in it of pith and marrow is smothered by these long-drawn-out preliminaries. If I spend an hour in reading him, which is a long time for me, and think over what I have extracted from him of sap and substance, I find oftenest only wind; for he has not yet reached the arguments that serve his purpose, or the reasons that fitly touch the point I seek. To me, who ask only to become wiser, not more learned or eloquent, these logical and Aristotelian arrangements of the matter are not adapted; I would have the last point come first; I understand well enough what death and pleasure are — time need not be spent in analysing them; I seek at the outset good and strong reasons, which will teach me how to withstand their power. Neither grammatical subtleties nor the skilful contexture of words and of arguments are of use here; I would have discourses that give the first charge at the strongest point of the question. His beat about the bush; they are good for the school, for the bar, and for the sermon, where it is permissible to doze, and a quarter of an hour later we are still in time to find the thread. There is need to speak thus to the judges

[1] See Seneca, *De Beneficiis*, II, 20.

who are to be won over, wrong or right, to children, and to the common people, (*c*) to whom every thing must be said, to see what will take effect. (*a*) I do not want time used to make me attentive and to cry out to me fifty times: *Or oyez*, as our heralds do. The Romans said in their worship, *Hoc age*, (*c*) as we say in ours, *Sursum corda*; (*a*) for me these are so many words wasted. I come to it [1] quite prepared from my abiding-place; I need no enticement and no sauce; I like meat quite uncooked; and, instead of sharpening my appetite by these preparations and preludes, they dull it, and weaken it.

(*c*) Will the license of the time absolve me for the sacrilegious audacity of thinking also that even the dialogisms of Plato drag, and too much smother his subject; and of deploring the time that a man who had so many better things to say gave to those long, futile, preparatory interlocutions? My ignorance will excuse me the more since I have no insight into the beauty of his language. In general, I seek books that make use of learning, not those that build it up. (*a*) The first two,[2] and Pliny and their like, have no *Hoc age;* they prefer to have to do with people who have forewarned themselves; or, if they have a *Hoc age*, it is a substantial one, which has its own separate body. I read also with pleasure the *Epistles ad Atticum*, not only because they contain very full instruction about the history and affairs of his time, but much more, to discover therein his personal humour. For I have a singular curiosity, as I have said elsewhere,[3] to know the soul and native judgements of my authors. We must judge their ability, but not their conduct or themselves, by the exhibition of their writings which they display on the stage of the world. I have regretted a thousand times that we have lost the book that Brutus wrote on virtue; for it is well to learn the theory from those who are familiar with the practice. But inasmuch as the exhortation is something different from the exhorter, I like as well to see Brutus in Plutarch as in himself. I should prefer to know truly the talk he had in his tent with some one of his in-

[1] That is, to my feast of reading.
[2] Plutarch and Seneca.
[3] See Book II, chap. 31.

timate friends, on the eve of a battle, rather than his harangue the next day to his army; and what he did in his study and his chamber, rather than what he did in the public square and in the Senate.

As for Cicero, I am of the common opinion, that, outside his learning, there was no great excellence in his soul; he was a good citizen, of an easy-going nature, as are usually burly men, fond of pleasantry,[1] as he was; but, to tell the truth, of weakness and ambitious vanity he had much. And, indeed, I know not how to excuse him for having deemed his poetry worthy of being brought to light; it is no great imperfection to make bad verses, but it shows imperfection not to have perceived how unworthy they were of the glory of his name. As for his eloquence, it is entirely beyond comparison; I believe that no man will ever equal it.[2] When the younger Cicero, who resembled his father only in name, had command of the troops in Asia, there chanced to be at his table one day several strangers, among others Cæstius, who was seated at the lower end, where intruders often placed themselves[3] at the open tables of the great. Cicero enquired of one of his people who he was, and was told his name. But, like one thinking of other things, he forgot the answer and asked again two or three times over. The servant, to avoid the trouble of repeating the same thing so often, and to make him recognise him by some particularity, said: "It is that Cæstius of whom you were told that he does not think highly of your father's eloquence in comparison with his own." At which Cicero, being suddenly angered, ordered the unhappy Cæstius to be seized, and had him well whipped in his presence.[4] What a discourteous host! Even among those who have judged that eloquence of his, all things considered, to be incomparable, there are some who have not failed to observe faults in it: as the great

[1] *Les hommes gras et gosseurs.*

[2] The editions of 1580–1588 add: *Si est-ce qu'il n'a pas en cela franchi si net son advantage comme Vergile a faict en la poesie: car bien tost après luy il s'en est trouvé plusieurs qui l'ont pensé égaler et surmonter, quoy que ce fust à bien fauces enseignes; mais à Vergile nul encore depuis luy n'a osé se comparer; et à ce propos j'en veux icy adjouter une histoire.*

[3] *Comme on se fourre souvent.*

[4] See Seneca, *Suasoriæ*, VIII.

Brutus, his friend, who said that it was a broken and nerveless eloquence — *fractam et elumbem*.[1] The orators of about his time criticised also in him the careful study of a certain long cadence at the end of his sentences, and noted these words: *esse videatur*,[2] which he used so often. I myself prefer a shorter cadence, cut into iambics. Also he sometimes confuses his measures very roughly, but not often. My ear has been struck by this passage: *Ego vero me minus diu senem esse mallem, quam esse senem, antequam essem*.[3]

Historians are my right ball;[4] for they are entertaining and easy, and at the same time, (*c*) man as a whole, knowledge of whom I seek, appears in their work more vividly and more completely than in any other place; the variety and reality of his inner conditions, in general and in detail, the diversity of the methods of his combination, and of the chances that threaten him.[5] (*a*) Because those of them who write of special lives busy themselves more with counsels than with events, more with what comes forth from within than with what arrives from without, they are fittest for me. That is why, in every way, Plutarch is my man. I am very sorry that we have not a dozen Laertiuses, and also that he was not more expansive (*c*) or more thoroughly informed.[6] For I am equally eager to know the fortunes and lives of these great teachers of the world and the diversity of their dogmas and ideas. (*a*) In this study of history, we must turn the leaves of all sorts of authors without distinction, both old and new, those in strange languages and in French, to learn the matters of which they diversely treat. But Cæsar alone seems to me to deserve to be studied, not only

[1] Tacitus, *De Oratoribus*, XVIII.

[2] It seems to be. — *Ibid.*, XXIII.

[3] I should rather be old less long than old before being so. — Cicero, *De Senectute*, X.

[4] Montaigne probably here has in mind the game of tennis (*paume*) in which a ball that comes on the right side of the player is much more easily dealt with than one that comes on his left side. In 1580 to 1588 the sentence read: *Historiens sont le vray gibier de mon estude.*

[5] In 1580–1588 this passage read (after "at the same time"): *la consideration des natures et conditions de divers hommes, les coustumes des nations differentes, c'est le vray suject de la science morale.*

[6] *Qu'il ne soit ou plus estandu ou plus entandu.* He refers to Diogenes Laertius.

for knowledge of history, but for himself, such perfection and excellence has he above all the others, even if Sallust be included. Certainly I read this author with a little more reverence and respect than that with which one reads human works, sometimes considering the man himself in his action and the miracle of his greatness, sometimes the purity and inimitable polish of his language, which surpasses not only all historians, as Cicero says,[1] but, perchance, Cicero himself. With such sincerity in his judgements, even when speaking of his enemies, that, save for the false colours with which he would cover over his bad cause and the ordure of his pestilent ambition, I think that only in this other respect can one find any ground for fault-finding — that he was too chary about speaking of himself. For so many great things can not have been accomplished by him, unless he had had much more hand in the doing of them than he sets down.[2]

I like historians to be either very simple or excelling in worth. The simple ones, who have not the wherewithal to add any thing of their own, and who bring only care and diligence in collecting all that comes to their notice, and in registering every thing honestly, without selecting and without sifting, leave our judgement unimpaired for discernment of the truth. Such is among others, for example, the good Froissart, who proceeds in his undertakings with such frank simplicity that, having made a mistake, he in no wise fears to acknowledge it and correct it at the point where he became aware of it; and who represents to us the very diversity of the rumours that were current and the different reports that were made to him. It is the substance of history, bare and shapeless; every one can profit by it according to his understanding. The historians who excel in worth have the ability to select what deserves to be known; can choose of two reports that which is most probable; from the condition of princes and their humours they deduce their counsels and attribute to them fitting words. They have the right to assume authority to regulate our belief by their own; but certainly that belongs to very few.

Those between the two (which is the most common kind),

[1] See Cicero, *Brutus*, LXXV.

[2] *Qu'il n'y soit allé beaucoup plus du sien qu'il n'y en met.*

they mar every thing: they choose to prepare it all for us;[1] they permit themselves to judge and, consequently, to bend history as they please; for when the judgement leans toward one side, it is not possible to keep from turning and twisting the narrative in that direction. They undertake to select the things worthy to be known, and often conceal from us some word, some private action, which would better inform us; they omit, as things not to be believed, those which they do not understand, and sometimes, perhaps, a thing because they do not know how to express it in good Latin or French. Let them boldly display their eloquence and their ideas; let them judge as they will; but let them also leave us the wherewithal to judge after them, and let them neither alter nor omit, by their abridgements and their selections, any part of the substance of their subject, but let them pass it on to us unchanged and complete in its every dimension.[2] Most frequently there are selected for this office, and especially in these days, persons belonging to the common people, for the sole reason that they can express themselves well; as if we there sought instruction in grammar. And they are in the right (having been hired only for this, and having offered nothing for sale but mere talk) to concern themselves chiefly with that alone. Thus with many fine words they compose a fine mixture of the rumours they pick up in the public squares of cities.

The only good histories are those which have been written by the very men who were at the head of affairs, or who were participants in conducting them, (*c*) or, at least, who had had the fortune to conduct others of the same sort. (*a*) Such are almost all Greek and Roman historians. For, several eye-witnesses having written of the same subject (as it happened in those days that eminence and knowledge were commonly combined), if there is a mistake, it must be a wonderfully trivial one and concerning a very doubtful incident. What can we expect of a physician speaking of war or of a scholar treating of the purposes of princes? If we would

[1] *Ils veulent nous mascher les morceaux.*

[2] The early editions add: *Ceux-la sont aussi bien plus recommandables historiens, qui connoissent les choses dequoy ils escrivent, ou pour avoir esté de la partie à les faire, ou privez avec ceux qui les ont conduites.*

note the scrupulousness of the Romans in this respect, only this example is needed: Asinius Pollio found even in Cæsar's histories some mistake into which he had fallen because he could not have cast his eye upon every part of his army, and gave credit to individuals, who often reported to him matters not sufficiently verified; or else because he had not been kept informed carefully enough by his lieutenants of things they had managed in his absence.[1] It can be seen by this how delicate a matter is the search for the truth; and that concerning a battle we can not trust to the knowledge of him who commanded in it or to the soldiers, for what happened near them, unless, after the manner of a judicial enquiry, we confront the witnesses and hear the objections before admitting as proved the least details of each incident. In truth, the knowledge that we have of our affairs is far more uncertain. But this has been sufficiently treated of by Bodin,[2] and in accordance with my ideas.

A little to aid me in the treacherousness of my memory and its failure, which is so extreme that it has happened to me more than once to take in hand, as new and unknown to me, books which I had read carefully several years before and scrawled over with my notes, I have for some time adopted the habit of adding at the end of each book (I mean of those which I care to use but once) the date at which I finished reading it and the opinion which I have formed of it as a whole; so that this may at least show me the character and the general idea that I conceived of the author while reading it. I will here transcribe some of these annotations. This is what I wrote about ten years ago in my Guicciardin[3] (for whatever tongue my books speaks, I speak to them in my own): "He is a careful historiographer, and in my opinion one can learn from him as accurately as from any other the truth concerning the affairs of his time; and in the greater part of them he was himself an actor and of honourable place. There is no indication that from hatred, favour,

[1] See Suetonius, *Life of Cæsar.*

[2] Jean Bodin, *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem.* M. Villey notes his remarks upon several matters treated by Montaigne in this chapter.

[3] Francesco Guicciardini, Italian historian.

or vanity, he has disguised any matter; this is confirmed by the frank judgements that he expresses of great men, and notably of those by whom he had been promoted and employed in public offices, as Pope Clement the Seventh. As to the part of his work to which he seems to wish to give the most weight, — I mean his digressions and discourses, — there are some that are good and enriched with fine expressions; but he took too much pleasure in them; for from his desire to omit nothing, having a subject so full and abundant, and almost infinite, he becomes weak and smacks a little of pedantic garrulity.[1] I have also remarked this, that of the many minds and deeds he judges, of the many activities and counsels, he never connects one of them with virtue, piety, or conscience, as if those motives were wholly extinct on earth; and of all the actions, however apparently noble they may be in themselves, he ascribes the cause to some sinful opportunity, or to some profit. It is impossible to believe that, among that infinite number of actions on which he passes judgement, there may not have been one inspired by the process of reason. No corruption can have infected men so universally that some one did not escape the contagion. This makes me fear that a little vice may have been to his taste; that this [2] may have come about because he judged others by himself."

In my Philippe de Commines there is this: "You will find the language smooth and agreeable, of a native simplicity; the narrative unadorned, and in it the author's honesty shines clearly forth, free from vanity when speaking of himself and from partiality and malice when speaking of others; his discourses and exhortations accompanied rather by honest zeal and by truth than by any remarkable ability; and everywhere an authority and seriousness bespeaking a man of good family brought up to great affairs."

In the Memoirs of Monsieur du Bellay: "It is always pleasant to see matters written of by those who have essayed how they should be managed; but it can not be denied that there is clearly to be perceived in these two noblemen [3] a

[1] *Et sentant un peu au caquet scholastique.*

[2] That is, his point of view.

[3] Martin du Bellay and Guillaume de Langey.

great falling off from the frankness and freedom in writing which shines forth in the earlier writers of their sort: as in the sieur de Joinville, the household friend of St. Louis, Eginhard, Chancellor to Charlemagne, and, of later date, in Philippe de Commines. Here it is rather a plea for King Francis against the Emperor Charles the Fifth, than a history. I do not choose to believe that they have transformed any thing as to general conditions; but they do their best to wrest the judgement of events, often contrary to reason, to our advantage, and to omit all that is questionable in the life of their master: witness the disgrace of Messieurs de Montmorency and de Brion, which are forgotten; and even the very name of Madame d'Estampes [1] is not found here. Secret acts may be covered up; but to keep silent about what all the world knows, and matters which have led to public results, and of such consequence, is an inexcusable offence. In fine, let him who would acquire complete knowledge of King Francis and of the things that occurred in his time look elsewhere, if I may be believed; the profit to be derived from this book is in the detailed narrations of the battles and the exploits of war in which these gentlemen took part; in certain private words and acts of some princes of their time, and in the dealings and negotiations conducted by the Seigneur de Langey, in which there is an abundance of things worthy to be known and of reflections out of the common." [2]

CHAPTER XI

OF CRUELTY

This Essay might quite as well — and better, one would think — have been entitled "Of Virtue," for it says more (and more interestingly) about virtue in general than about the vice of cruelty. Indeed, even when it reaches in mid-stretch this its nominal subject, it is still chiefly the virtue of compassion that it dwells on. This is delightfully characteristic of Montaigne: he never turns our attention, save momentarily, to the common, or uncommon, vices of mankind, but brings before us the habitual excellences and possible superiorities of human nature.

[1] Anne de Pisseleu, duchesse d'Estampes, mistress of Francis I.

[2] *Discours non vulgaires.*

There is interest in comparing the admirable conception of virtue in the opening sentences with the more "romantic" one, written later than this, in the "Education of Children."

This is one of the charmingly conversation-like Essays, as we feel when we come across the sudden, almost humorous, confession of an unthought-of difficulty in his argument. It occurs to him that the *best* men after all do not find virtue difficult, but he soon discovers (just as in talk — a Platonic talk) that there may be considered to be three degrees of virtue: the first is "being simply endowed with an easy and kindly nature"; a higher is "preventing by active strength the progress of vice"; and highest of all is "preventing the birth of temptations." In the course of this discussion he makes use of the noble examples of the death of Socrates and that of the younger Cato,[1] bestowing on the latter an enthusiasm of admiration that jars a little on modern sensibilities; and one is glad to have him recognise that that of Socrates is "the more beautiful."

Continuing his course, and observing that men are often praised for what rather deserves blame in them, he says "one word about myself," and describes himself with his wonted simplicity and truthfulness; and in so doing he is led to say, "I cruelly hate cruelty," adding (after a digression on the "violent pleasure" of "hunting"), "I feel very tenderly compassionate about the sufferings of others"; and from this he passes to admirable counsels regarding the forms of capital punishment.

A passage often referred to as indicating one of the points where Montaigne's thought was far in advance of the general tone of his times is thus phrased: "All that is beyond mere death seems to me pure cruelty." This is repeated in the Essay, "Cowardice the Mother of Cruelty." It was one of the points for which he was reprimanded at Rome, and which he defended, saying, of it and other like things, "that this was my opinion and that these things I had uttered, not considering them to be errors." It was only a very few of his contemporaries who had reached this height in their conception of the proper manner of dealing with criminals. This passage connects itself with that in "Of the Conscience," where he condemns more at length the use of torture.

What he says of the incredible cruelty of his own times is of frightful force, and assists our imaginations in seeing his own life, truly, as far other than that of a recluse student — a man of letters.

In the other Essay on cruelty, referred to above, he says: "I have seen some of the most cruel men weeping easily and for trifling causes." (It is only this generation of Montaigne's American readers that has seen many "cruel men.")

He, in fact, had beheld at many different times and in many different scenes men "dying in agony" — from the cruelty of their fellows. We

[1] In one of the very last Essays, that on Physiognomy, Montaigne recurs again to a comparison of these two great men. In that passage, and in a later one of the same Essay, he gives clear evidence of ranking the character of Socrates as much the higher.

should never forget, in reading Montaigne, that, as Sainte-Beuve says, "he lived in an age which a man who had passed through the Terror [M. Daunou] could call the most tragic age of all history."

From cruelty to men he passes to cruelty to animals, and thence to the transmigration of souls; and closes with a lovely passage about a general duty of humanity not to animals only, but even to trees and to plants.

IT seems to me that virtue is a different and a nobler thing than those inclinations toward goodness which are born in us. Souls under their own control and of a naturally good disposition [1] follow the same course, and display in their actions the same appearance as the virtuous. But virtue imports a something, I know not what, greater and more active than merely allowing oneself to be led by a happy nature gently and peacefully in the train of reason. He who, from natural gentleness and good-nature, should despise the affronts he received, would do a very fine thing and worthy of praise; but he who, stung and pierced to the quick by an affront, should arm himself with the weapons of reason against his fierce eagerness for revenge, and, after a hard fight, should at last make himself master of it, would doubtless do a much greater thing. The first would do well, the latter virtuously; the one action might be called goodness, the other, virtue; for it would seem that the name of virtue presupposes difficulty and contention, and that it can not be practised without an adversary. Perchance this is why we call God good, and mighty, and gracious, and just; but we do not call him virtuous; his deeds are all natural and without effort.

Of the philosophers, not only the Stoics, but the Epicureans also (and this emphasis I borrow from the common opinion, which is false; [*c*] whatever was implied in the witty answer that Arcesilaus made to him who taunted him because many persons went from his school to the Epicurean, and never in the opposite direction: "That may well be; capons are made of cocks, but never cocks of capons." [2] [*a*] For, in truth, in firmness and strictness of opinions and precepts the Epicurean sect is in no wise below the Stoic;

[1] *Les ames reglées d'elles mesmes et bien nées.*

[2] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Arcesilaus.*

and a Stoic — showing more honesty than those disputants who, to combat Epicurus and to give themselves the advantage, make him say what he never thought, distorting his words,[1] deriving by the laws of grammar a different meaning from his mode of expression, and a different belief from that which they know him to have had in his soul and in his life[2] — says that he abandoned the Epicurean sect for this reason among others: that he found their path too high and inaccessible; [*c*] *et ii qui φιλήδονοι vocantur, sunt φιλόκαλοι et φιλοδίχαιοι, omnesque virtutes et colunt et retinent*);[3] (*a*) among the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers, I say, there are many who thought that it was not enough to have the soul in a good frame, well controlled and well disposed to virtue; that it was not enough to have our resolutions and our reasonings superior to all the force of fortune; but that, besides, opportunities must be sought for putting them to the proof. These would go in quest of pain, of want, and of contempt, to combat them and to keep their minds vigorous; (*c*) *multum sibi adjicit virtus lacessita*.[4] (*a*) That is one of the reasons why Epaminondas, who was of a third sect,[5] refuses the riches which fortune, by very lawful means, puts in his hand, that he may, as he says, be forced to fight against poverty, in which extremity he always remains.[6] Socrates tested himself, it seems to me, even more severely, making use, for his practice, of the malignity of his wife, which was a test in good earnest.[7] Metellus, alone among all the Roman senators, having undertaken by the power of his virtue to withstand the violence of Saturninus, tribune of the people at Rome, who desired to secure by main force the passage of an unjust law in favour of the common people;

[1] *Contournans ses paroles à gauche.*

[2] *Et en ses meurs.*

[3] And they who are called devotees of pleasure are devotees of beauty and of justice, and cultivate and practise all the virtues. — Cicero, *Epistulæ ad Familiares*, XV, 19. This is a letter written to Cicero by C. Cassius.

[4] Virtue is much strengthened by being assailed. — Seneca, *Epistle* 13.3.

[5] The Pythagorean. See Cicero, *De Off.*, I, 44.

[6] See Plutarch, *Of the Familiar Spirit of Socrates.*

[7] See Plutarch, *How one can derive benefit from one's enemies.*

and having incurred thereby the heavy penalties which Saturninus had assigned for the recusants, discoursed thus to those who in that extremity surrounded him in the public place: "That to do ill was too easy and too base a thing; and that to do well where there was no danger was an ordinary thing; but to do well where there was danger was the peculiar duty of a virtuous man."[1] These words of Metellus put before us very clearly what I wished to prove: that virtue refuses facility for a companion; and that the easy, gently sloping path by which the even steps of a good natural disposition are guided is not that of true virtue. She requires a rough and thorny road;[2] she desires to have either outside difficulties to contend with, like that of Metellus, by means of which it pleases fortune to interrupt the steadiness of her career; or internal difficulties, which the disordered appetites and imperfections of our nature bring upon her.

I have come thus far at my ease. But at the end of this dissertation it occurs to me that the soul of Socrates, which is the most perfect that has come to my knowledge, would be, by my reckoning, a soul with little to commend it; for I can not conceive in that personage any force of vicious desires. I can not imagine his virtue to have been accompanied by any difficulty or any constraint; I know his reason to have been so powerful and so sovereign in him that it would never have permitted even the birth of a vicious appetite. I can place nothing in advance of a virtue of such high rank as his.[3] I seem to see her marching along with a victorious and triumphant step, in state and at her ease, without hindrance or obstacle. If virtue can be brilliant only through the conflict of opposing appetites, shall we then say that it can not dispense with the assistance of vice, and that it owes to vice the being held in credit and honour? What would betide, also, that noble and generous Epicurean pleasure,[4] which is wont to nurture virtue gently in its lap

[1] See Plutarch, *Life of Marius*.

[2] Cf. the very different conception of virtue which Montaigne sets forth in Book I, chap. 26 (Vol. I, p. 216), in a passage written after 1588.

[3] *A une vertu si eslevée que la sienne, je ne puis rien mettre en teste.*

[4] *Volupté.*

and to make her frolic there, giving her, for her playthings, shame, sickness, poverty, death, and tortures?

If I assume that perfect virtue is recognised by combatting pain and enduring it patiently, by supporting the assaults of gout without being shaken from her seat; if I give her, as in necessary relation with her,[1] unpleasantness and difficulty, what will betide the virtue which shall have risen to such a point as not simply to scorn pain, but to rejoice in it, and to be pleased by the prick of a sharp colic, like that virtue which the Epicureans instituted, and of which many of them have left by their actions indisputable proofs? As have many others, likewise, whom I find to have, in very fact, gone beyond even the rules of their doctrine. Witness the younger Cato. When I see him dying and tearing out his entrails, I can not content myself with believing simply that his soul was then totally exempt from trouble and terror; I can not believe that he simply maintained himself in that attitude which the rules of the Stoic sect prescribed, tranquil, without emotion, and impassible; there was, it seems to me, in that man's virtue too much lustiness and vigour [2] to stop at that. I believe without question that he felt some pleasure and sensuous delight in so noble an act, and that it was more acceptable to him than any other he ever performed. (*c*) *Sic abiit e vita ut causam moriendi nactum se esse gauderet.*[3] (*a*) I believe this so completely, that I am in doubt whether he would have wished that the occasion for so fine an achievement had been denied him. And, if the uprightness which made him embrace the public interest rather than his own did not keep me in check, I should readily hold the opinion that he was grateful to fortune for having put his virtue to so glorious a test, and for having assisted that brigand [4] to trample under foot the ancient liberty of his country. It seems to me that I read in his deed I know not what rejoicing of his soul and an emotion of

[1] *Pour son object necessaire.*

[2] *Trop de gaillardise et de verdeur.*

[3] So he departed from life, rejoicing that a reason for dying had arisen. — Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, I, 30.

[4] Julius Cæsar.

extraordinary pleasure and manly zest,[1] when it considered the nobility and loftiness of his venture.

(*b*) Deliberata morte ferocior,[2]

(*a*) not spurred on by any hope of glory, as the vulgar and weak judgements of some men have thought;[3] for that consideration is too base to influence a heart so noble, so proud, and so determined; but for the inherent beauty of the thing itself, which he saw much more clearly and in its perfection — he who touched its springs — than we can do. (*c*) Philosophy has given me pleasure in judging that so noble an act would have been unfitly placed in any other life than in that of Cato, and that for his alone was it meet so to end. Therefore he with reason bade his son, and the senators who attended him, to provide otherwise for their death. *Catoni cum incredibilem natura tribuisset gravitatem, eamque ipse perpetua constantia roboravisset, semperque in proposito consilio permansisset, moriendum potius quam tyranni vultus aspiciendus erat.*[4]

Every death should be like its life. We do not become other by dying. I always interpret the death by the life.[5] And if some one describes to me a death sturdy in appearance, joined to a feeble life, I maintain that it is produced by a feeble cause and conformable to the life. (*a*) The ease, therefore, of this death, and the facility he had acquired by the strength of his soul — shall we say that it should somewhat detract from the splendour of his virtue? And who, among those whose brains are ever so little imbued with true philosophy, can content himself with imagining that Socrates was simply free from fear and suffering in the mis-

[1] *Et d'une voluptê virile.*

[2] The more courageous when determined on death. — Horace, *Odes*, I, 37.29.

[3] Cf. Book I, chap. 37, (Vol. I, p. 306): *Qui plus est, nos jugemens sont encore malades et suyvent la depravation de nos meurs*, etc.

[4] Cato, whom Nature had endowed with incredible force of soul, which he had strengthened by constant firmness, always had the fixed opinion that death was preferable to looking upon the countenance of a tyrant. — Cicero, *De Off.*, I, 31.

[5] Cf. the opening sentence of Book II, chap. 13 (Vol. III, p. 3); also the last sentence of Book I, chap. 19 (Vol. I, p. 104): *Au jugement de la vie d'autruy, je regarde tousjours comment s'en est porté le bout.*

chance of his imprisonment, his fetters, and his condemnation? And who does not recognise in him, not only firmness and constancy (which was his usual condition), but also in his last words and actions I know not what of new-born satisfaction and a playful joyousness? (*c*) In that thrill from the pleasure that he feels in scratching his leg after the fetters were removed,[1] is there not evidenced a like relief and joy in his soul in being freed from past unpleasantnesses [2] and being about to enter into knowledge of future things? (*a*) Cato will forgive me, if he so please; his death is more tragic and more intense, but this one is, I know not how, still more beautiful.[3] (*c*) Aristippus said to those who were bewailing it: "May the Gods send me one like it!" [4]

(*a*) We see in the souls of these two men and their imitators (for I have great doubt if there ever were any like them) such a perfect habit of virtue, that it had become their nature. It is no longer a laborious virtue, or due to the behests of reason, to carry which into effect, the soul needed to brace itself; it is the very essence of the soul; it is its natural and ordinary course. They made it so by long practice of the precepts of philosophy in contact with a noble and rich nature. The vicious passions, which are born in us, find no means of entrance into them; the strength and firmness of their souls stifle and extinguish concupiscences as soon as they begin to bestir themselves.

Now, I think that there is no question that it is a finer thing to prevent, by a high and divine resolution, the birth of temptation, and to have trained oneself to virtue in such wise that the very seeds of vice are uprooted, than to prevent their growth by main force, and, having allowed oneself to be surprised by the first motions of the passions, to arm and brace oneself to stay their progress and conquer them; and that this second state is, again, finer than simply to be endowed with a facile and easy-going nature, of itself disgusted by debauchery and vice. For this third

[1] An allusion to the *Phædo* of Plato.

[2] *Pour estre desenforgée des incommoditez passées.*

[3] Montaigne recurs to this comparison between the deaths of Cato and Socrates, in Book III, chap. 12.

[4] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Aristippus.*

and last sort seems indeed to make a man innocent, but not virtuous; exempt from doing evil, but not sufficiently apt to do well. Moreover, this last condition is so near to imperfection and weakness that I know not well how to discover their confines and distinguish them. The very words Goodness and Innocence are, for this reason, in some sort words of contempt. I see that many virtues, as chastity, sobriety, and temperance, may come to us through bodily failings. Steadiness in danger (if it must be called steadiness), contempt of death, patience in misfortune may come, and are often found in men through failure to judge rightly of such circumstances, and to conceive them such as they are. Lack of apprehension and stupidity thus sometimes counterfeit virtuous conditions; as I have often seen it happen that men have been praised for something for which they deserved blame.

An Italian gentleman once said, in my presence, to the discredit of his nation, that the acuteness of the Italians and the vividness of their conceptions were so great that they foresaw from such a distance the dangers and mishaps that might befall them, that it must not be found strange if they were often seen in war to provide for their safety even before they had perceived the peril; that we and the Spaniards, not being so wary, went on further, and that we needed actually to see and feel the danger before taking alarm at it; and that then, consequently, we had nothing to rely upon; but that the Germans and the Swiss, being more heavy-witted [1] and more dull, had not the sense to bethink themselves, even when they were borne down with blows. This was only a jest, perhaps. Yet it is very true that, in the action of war, the untrained often rush into risks with more recklessness than they do after they have sustained injury;

(*b*) haud ignarus quantum nova gloria in armis,
Et prædulce decus primo certamine possit.[2]

(*a*) It is for this reason that, when we judge a special act, many circumstances must be considered, and in his entirety the man who performed it, before giving it a name.

[1] *Plus grossiers.*

[2] Not ignorant what the power is of new glory won by arms, and of the sweetness of a first victory. — Virgil, *Æneid*, XI, 154.

To say a word of myself, — (*b*) I have sometimes heard my friends call prudence in me what was luck; and suppose to be due to courage and patience what was due to judgement and reasoning; and attribute to me one quality for another, sometimes to my gain and sometimes to my loss. Meanwhile, (*a*) I am so far from having attained that highest and most perfect degree of excellence, wherein virtue becomes a habit, that even of the second degree I have hardly given proof. I have not put forth great strength to curb the desires by which I found myself beset. My virtue is a virtue — or innocence, to speak more accurately — casual and fortuitous. Had I been born with a more unruly temperament, I fear that it would have gone miserably enough with me. For I have felt in my soul scarcely the firmness to resist passions if they had been never so little violent. I know not how to breed quarrels and debates in my own breast.[1] Thus I can give myself no great thanks because I find myself exempt from many vices;

> si vitiis mediocribus et mea paucis
> Mendosa est natura, alioqui recta, velut si
> Egregio inspersos reprehendas corpore nævos,[2]

I owe it more to my fortune than to my sense. My fortune caused me to be born of a family famous for integrity [3] and of a most excellent father. I know not if some of his dispositions have passed into me, or if the domestic examples and good education of my childhood have insensibly aided therein, or if I was otherwise born so, —

> (*b*) Seu libra, seu me scorpius aspicit
> Formidolosus, pars violentior
> Natalis horæ, seu tyrannus
> Hesperiæ Capricornus undæ; [4] —

[1] *Je ne sçay point nourrir des querelles et du debat chez moy.*

[2] If my nature, otherwise good, is marred by slight faults, but few, as you may find to condemn some spots scattered over a fair body. — Horace, *Satires*, I, 6.65.

[3] *D'une race fameuse en preud'homie.*

[4] Whether Libra, or dread Scorpio, the most powerful planet over the natal hour, controls me, or Capricorn, the lord of the western wave. — Horace, *Odes*, II, 17.17.

(*a*) but so it is that by nature I hold most vices in abhorrence. (*c*) The reply of Antisthenes to one who inquired of him what instruction was the best, "to unlearn evil,"[1] seems to be based on this conception.[2] I hold them in abhorrence, I say, (*a*) with a conviction so inborn and so personal that I have retained the same instinct and impression about them that I brought from infancy; and nothing has ever caused me to change it, no, not even my own reasonings, which, because they have in some matters forsaken the common path, would easily permit me to do things which this natural inclination makes me detest. (*b*) I will confess something extraordinary; but I will confess it none the less: I find, in many things, more fixedness and regularity in my morals than in my opinions, and my desires less astray than my reason.[3]

(*c*) Aristippus put forward such audacious opinions in favour of pleasures and riches that he stirred up all philosophy to oppose him. But with respect to his morals, Dionysius the tyrant having offered him three beautiful wenches, that he might choose among them, he replied that he chose all three, and that it had gone ill with Paris for preferring one to her companions; but having taken them to his house, he sent them away without touching them.[4] His servant finding himself overburdened with the money that he was carrying after him on the road, he bade him empty out and throw away so much of it as incommoded him.[5] And Epicurus, whose tenets are irreligious and effeminate, bore himself in his life most scrupulously and laboriously. He wrote to a friend of his that he lived only on coarse bread and water, and asked him to send him a little cheese against the time when he might wish to have a sumptuous repast.[6] Can it be true that, to be really good, we must needs be so by an occult, natural, and universal disposition, without law, without reason, without example?

[1] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Antisthenes.*
[2] *Semble s'arreter à cette image.*
[3] *Et ma concupiscence moins desbauchée que ma raison.*
[4] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Aristippus.*
[5] See *Ibid.*
[6] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Epicurus.*

(*a*) The excesses in which I have found myself engaged are not, thank God, of the worst sort. I have condemned them in myself, according as they deserve it; for my judgement has not been corrupted by them; on the contrary, it blames them more sternly in me than in another. But that is all, for meanwhile I oppose too little resistance to them, and allow myself too easily to weigh down the other side of the balance, only keeping them in order and preventing the mingling of other vices, which for the most part cling and twine together in him who is not on his guard. Mine I have curtailed and constrained to be as single and simple as possible;

(*b*) nec ultra
Errorem foveo.[1]

(*a*) For, as to the opinion of the Stoics, who say that the wise man acts, when he acts, by means of all the virtues together,[2] although there may be one or more in evidence according to the nature of the action (and herein the similitude of the human body might somewhat serve them, for the action of anger can not take place unless the whole nature[3] assist, although anger predominates), if from that they wish to draw a like consequence, that, when the sinner sins, he sins by means of all the vices together, I do not so unhesitatingly believe them, or I do not understand them; for I am personally sensible of the contrary. (*c*) These are ingenious, unsubstantial subtleties, which philosophy sometimes pauses over. I follow after some vices, but I fly from others as much as a saint could do. The Peripatetics likewise do not acknowledge this indissoluble connection and union, and Aristotle holds that a prudent and reasonable man may be both intemperate and incontinent.[4]

(*a*) Socrates acknowledged to those who perceived in his physiognomy some tendency to vice, that such was in truth his natural propensity, but that he had corrected it by discipline.[5] (*c*) And the intimates of the philosopher Stilpo

[1] Nor further do I favour error. — Juvenal, VIII, 164.
[2] See Plutarch, *Contradictions of the Stoic philosophers.*
[3] *Toutes les humeurs.*
[4] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Aristotle.*
[5] See Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, IV, 37.

said that, having been born a slave to wine and women, he made himself, through reflection, very abstinent in regard to both.[1]

(*a*) What there is in me of good I owe, on the contrary, to the chance of my birth. I derive it neither from law, nor from precept, nor from any other teaching. (*b*) The innocence that is in me is a witless innocence; little strength and no art. (*a*) I do hate cruelly, among other vices, cruelty, both by nature and by judgement, as the worst of all the vices; but to such a degree of weakness that I can not see a chicken's throat cut without discomfort, and I can not endure hearing the cry of a hare in the teeth of my dog, although hunting is an impetuous pleasure.

Those who have to combat pleasure [2] make use freely of this argument to show that it is wholly vicious and unreasonable; that, when it is in fullest strength, it so masters us that the reason can not gain access to it; and they allege the experience that we have of this in commerce with women, —

> cum jam præsagit gaudia corpus,
> Atque in eo est venus ut muliebria conserat arva; [3] —

où il leur semble que le plaisir nous transporte si fort hors de nous, que nostre discours ne sçauroit lors faire son office, tout perclus et ravi en la volupté. Je sçay qu'il en peut aller autrement, et qu'on arrivera par fois, si on veut, à rejeter l'ame sur ce mesme instant à autres pensemens. Mais il la faut tendre et roidir d'aguet. Je sçay qu'on peut gourmander l'effort de ce plaisir; (*c*) et m'y connois bien; et si n'ay point trouvé Venus si imperieuse Deesse que plusieurs et plus chastes que moi la tesmoignent. (*a*) Je ne prens pour miracle, comme faict la Royne de Navarre en l'un des contes de son *Heptameron* (qui est un gentil livre pour son estoffe), ny pour chose d'extreme difficulté, de passer des nuicts entires en toute commodité et liberté, avec une maistresse de long temps desirée, maintenant la foy qu'on luy aura engagée de se contenter des baisers et simples attouchemens. I conceive that the example of the pleasure of

[1] See Cicero, *De Fato*, V.
[2] *La volupté.*
[3] Lucretius, IV, 1106.

hunting would be more fitting (*c*) (while there is less pleasure in it, there is more ravishment and surprise, whereby our reason, startled, has not time to prepare itself for the encounter)[1] (*a*) when after a long quest the beast suddenly appears in a place where, perhaps, we least hoped for it. This shock and the eagerness of these shouts so affect us that it would be difficult for those who love this sort of hunting to turn their thoughts elsewhere at that moment. And the poets make Diana victorious over the torch and the arrows of Cupid:

> Quis non malarum, quas amor curas habet,
> Hæc inter obliviscitur?[2]

[3]To return to my subject — I very tenderly compassionate the afflictions of another, and could easily weep for company if, for any cause whatever, I were able to weep. (*c*) There is nothing that draws forth my tears, save tears, and not true ones only, but of whatever sort, either feigned or pictured.[4] (*a*) The dead I scarcely grieve for, and could rather envy them; but I greatly grieve for the dying. Savages do not so much displease me by roasting and eating the bodies of the departed as do those who torture and persecute them when alive.[5] Even the execution of the law, however just it may be, I can not view with steadiness. Some one having to testify to the clemency of Julius Cæsar, "he was," he said, "mild in his vengeance; having forced the pirates to surrender to him, whom they had formerly taken prisoner and held for ransom forasmuch as he had threatened to have them crucified, he sentenced them to that punishment, but it was to be after they had been strangled." Philemon his secre-

[1] The passage, "while there . . . encounter" was substituted in 1595 for the following passage of 1580–1588: *auquel il semble qu'il y ait plus de ravissement; non pas, à mon advis, que le plaisir soit si grand de soy, mais parce qu'il ne nous donne pas tant de loisir de nous bander et preparer au contraire, et qu'il nous surprend.*

[2] Who does not forget, amid these delights, the bitter anxieties that love excites? — Horace, *Epodes*, II, 37.

[3] In 1580–1588: *C'est ici un fagotage de pieces decousus; je me suis detourné de ma voye, pour dire ce mot de la chasse. Mais —*

[4] *Ou feintes ou peintes.*

[5] Cf. Book I, chap. 31 (Vol. I, p. 279).

tary, who had tried to poison him, he punished no more severely than by mere death.[1] Without naming the Latin author who dares to allege, as evidence of clemency, the simple putting to death of those by whom one has been wronged, it is easy to divine that he was affected by the vile and horrible examples of cruelty put into practice by the Roman tyrants. For my part, even in matters of justice, any thing that is beyond mere death seems to me pure cruelty, and especially in us, who ought to have regard to send men's souls hence in good condition; which can not be when they have been agitated and thrown into despair by intolerable tortures.

(*c*) Not long ago, a captive soldier, having perceived from the tower where he was that carpenters were beginning to erect scaffoldings in the public square and the populace to assemble there, thought that it was for him; and falling into despair, having nothing else with which to kill himself, he seized upon an old rusty cart-nail which fortune offered him, and gave himself two great cuts in the throat; and seeing that he had not thereby been able to destroy his life, he very soon dealt himself another wound in the belly, after which he fell in a swoon; and in this condition he was found by the first of his guards who came to see him. They brought him to, and to make use of the time before life failed, they read him at once his sentence, which was to have his head cut off; by which he was infinitely rejoiced, and consented to take wine, which he had refused; and thanking the judges for the unhoped-for mildness of their judgement, said that the determination to kill himself had come from the dread of some more cruel punishment, the fear of which had been increased by the preparations that he had seen making on the square; and that he seemed to be delivered from death by the form having been changed.

(*a*) I should advise that this sort of severity, by means of which it is desired to hold the people to their duty, be practised upon the bodies of criminals; for to see them deprived of burial, to see them boiled and quartered, would touch the common people almost as much as the punishments which

[1] See Suetonius, *Life of Julius Cæsar.*

the living are made to suffer, since, in fact, that [1] amounts to little or nothing; (*c*) as God says, *Qui corpus occidunt, et postea non habent quod faciant.*[2] And the poets emphasise particularly the horribleness of this sight, and more than death.

> Heu! relliquias semiassi regis, denudatis ossibus,
> Per terram sanie delibutas fœde divexarier.[3]

(*a*) I happened to be in Rome at the time when they dispatched Catena, a famous robber. They strangled him, without any excitement among the spectators; but when they came to quartering him, the executioner gave no stroke that the people did not follow with a doleful moan and cry, as if every one had lent his own feeling to that carcass.[4]

(*b*) We should practise these inhuman barbarities on what is insensible,[5] not on the living flesh. Thus Artaxerxes, in a somewhat similar case, softened the old laws of Persia, ordaining that the nobles who had done amiss in their office, instead of being whipped as was the custom, should be stripped, and their clothes whipped in their stead; and instead of having their hair torn out, as was the custom, they should only have their high hats taken from them.[6] (*c*) The so devout Egyptians thought that they satisfied divine justice by sacrificing figures and representations of pigs;[7] a rash conception, to seek to pay God, that so essential substance, with pictures and imitations.[8]

(*a*) I live in an epoch in which we abound in incredible examples of this vice, from the license of our civil wars; and we find nothing in the ancient histories more excessive than what we experience every day. But this [familiarity] has in no wise accustomed me to it. I could hardly persuade my-

[1] That is, the effect on the people.

[2] St. Luke, XII, 4.—[Be not afraid of them] that kill the body and after that have no more that they can do.

[3] Alas! that half-burned remains of a king, the bones laid bare, covered with foul dirt, should be dragged on the ground! — Ennius, in Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, I, 44.

[4] The last two sentences were added in 1582.

[5] *Contre l'escorce.*

[6] See Plutarch, *Apothegms of Kings*, etc.

[7] See Herodotus, II, 47.

[8] *En peinture et en ombrage.*

self, before I had seen it, that there are souls so savage that for the mere pleasure of murder they will commit it, will hew and chop off the limbs of others, will sharpen their wits in inventing unwonted tortures and new kinds of death, without enmity, without profit, and for the sole end of enjoying the pleasing spectacle of the pitiful gestures and motions, the groans and lamentable outcries of a man dying in agony. For that is the extreme limit that cruelty can attain. (*c*) *Ut homo hominem, non iratus, non timens, tantum spectaturus occidat.*[1] (*a*) For my part, I have never been able to see without discomfort even the pursuit and killing of an innocent beast, who is without defence and from whom we receive no offence. And as it commonly happens that the stag, finding himself breathless and strengthless, having no other resource, turns back and surrenders to us who are pursuing him, asking mercy from us by his tears, —

(*b*) quæstuque cruentus
Atque imploranti similis,[2] —

(*a*) this has always seemed to me a very grievous spectacle. (*b*) I take alive scarcely any beast to whom I do not restore its liberty. Pythagoras used to buy them from fishermen and from bird-catchers, to do the same.[3]

(*a*) Primoque a cæde ferarum
Incaluisse puto maculatum sanguine ferrum.[4]

Those who are naturally sanguinary with regard to animals give evidence of a natural inclination to cruelty. (*b*) After they were accustomed, at Rome, to the spectacles of the murder of animals, there came those of men and of gladiators. Nature, so I fear, has herself implanted in man some instinct of inhumanity. No one finds pleasure in seeing beasts play together and caress one another, and no one fails to find it in seeing them destroy and rend one

[1] That a man should kill a man, not in anger or in fear, solely as a spectacle! — Seneca, *Epistle* 90.45.

[2] Covered with blood, and lamenting, and like one imploring. — Virgil, *Æneid*, VII, 501.

[3] See Plutarch, *Table-Talk*.

[4] And it was first, I think, by the slaughter of wild beasts that weapons were stained with blood. — Ovid, *Metam.*, XV, 106.

another. (*a*) And I may not be laughed at for this sympathy that I have for them, since theology herself ordains kindness toward them; and, considering that one and the same master has placed us in this palace for his service, and that they, like us, are of his family, she is justified in enjoining us to have some consideration and some affection for them.

Pythagoras borrowed the doctrine of metempsychosis from the Egyptians; but since then, it has been accepted by many nations, and notably by our Druids: —

> Morte carent animæ; semperque, priore relicta
> Sede, novis domibus vivunt, habitantque receptæ.[1]

The religion of our ancient Gauls held that men's souls, being eternal, never ceased to move and change place from one body to another; with that conception it mingled, too, a certain consideration of divine justice; for, according to the conduct of the soul while it was in Alexander, they said that God ordained for it another body to dwell in, more disagreeable or less so, and suitable for its condition.[2]

> (*b*) Muta ferarum
> Cogit vincla pati, truculentos ingerit ursis,
> Prædonesque lupis, fallaces volpibus addit;
> Atque ubi per varios annos per mille figuras
> Egit, lethæo purgatos flumine, tandem
> Rursus ad humanæ revocat primordia formæ.[3]

(*a*) If it had been courageous, it was supposed to be placed in the body of a lion; if licentious, in that of a hog; if cowardly, in that of a stag or a hare; if cunning, in that of a fox; and so with the rest, until, purified by this chastisement, it again took the body of another man.

[1] Our souls are exempt from death; and always, after leaving their primal seat, they live in new homes, and there dwell, returned to life. — Ovid, *Metam.*, XV, 158.

[2] See Cæsar, *De Bello Gallico*, VI, 14.

[3] He forces them dumbly to suffer imprisonment in wild beasts; he puts the cruel in bears, robbers in wolves, and hides deceivers in foxes. And after many years, having passed through a thousand forms, by the river of Lethe he at last calls them back to their primordial human forms. — Claudian, *In Rufinum*, II, 482.

Ipse ego, nam memini, Trojani tempore belli
Panthoïdes Euphorbus eram.[1]

As for this cousinship between ourselves and beasts, I make no great account of it; nor of the fact that many nations, and notably some of the most ancient and most noble, have not only admitted beasts to their society and companionship, but have accorded them a rank very far above themselves, sometimes regarding them as familiars and favourites of the gods and having for them respect and veneration as more than human; and other nations acknowledging no other god or other divinity than them; [2] (*c*) *belluæ a barbaris propter beneficium consecratæ*.[3]

(*b*) Crocodilon adorat
Pars hæc, illa pavet saturam serpentibus Ibin;
Effigies sacri hic nitet aurea cercopitheci;
. . . . . .
. . . hic piscem fluminis, illic
Oppida tota canem venerantur.[4]

(*a*) And even the interpretation that Plutarch gives of this error, which is very well conceived, is still to their honour. For he says that it was not the cat or ox, for example, that the Egyptians worshipped, but that in those beasts they worshipped some image of divine attributes: in the latter, patience (*c*) and usefulness, (*a*) and in the other, activity; [5] (*c*) or, resembling our neighbours the Burgundians and all Germany, impatience at being confined; and thus they pictured the liberty which they loved and adored above every other divine attribute; (*a*) and so with the rest. But when I meet, among the more moderate views, arguments whose

[1] In fact, I myself remember that, at the time of the Trojan war, I was Euphorbus, son of Panthous. — Ovid, *Metam.*, XV, 160. It is Pythagoras who is supposed to be speaking.

[2] See Plutarch, *Of Isis and Osiris*.

[3] The beasts, because of benefits received from them, were deified by the barbarians. — Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, I, 36.

[4] In one land they adore the crocodile, in another they tremble before an ibis fed on serpents; here gleams the sacred image of a golden, long-tailed ape; . . . here a river fish, there a dog, is venerated by whole cities. — Juvenal, XV, 2–4, 6, 7.

[5] See Plutarch, *Of Isis and Osiris*.

purpose is to prove the close resemblance between ourselves and animals, and how largely they share in our greatest advantages, and with how much likelihood they are compared to us, I certainly then abate much of our presumption, and readily resign that imaginary sovereignty over other creatures which is attributed to us.

Even if all this were lacking, yet is there a certain consideration and a certain duty of humanity that binds us, not only to beasts that have life and feeling, but even to trees and plants. We owe justice to men, and kindness and benignity to other creatures which may be susceptible to it. There is some intercourse between them and ourselves, and some mutual obligation. (*c*) I am not afraid to declare that my feelings are so easily touched, like those of a child, that I can not well refuse my dog the playmating that he offers me unseasonably, or that he begs me for. (*b*) The Turks have charities and hospitals for beasts. (*a*) The Romans took public care of the nurture of geese, by whose vigilance their capital had been saved;[1] the Athenians decreed that the mules and asses[2] that had served in the building of the temple called Hecatompedon should be set free and that they should be let graze everywhere without hindrance.[3] (*c*) The Agrigentines had as a common custom the careful burying of the beasts that they had held dear, such as horses of rare excellence, dogs, and useful birds, or even those that had served as pastime for their children. And the magnificence which was usual with them in all other matters appeared also markedly in the sumptuousness and number of the monuments erected to that end, which remained in their pride for many ages after.[4] The Egyptians buried wolves, bears, crocodiles, dogs, and cats in sacred places, embalmed their bodies, and wore mourning at their death.[5] (*a*) Cymon gave honourable sepulture to the mares with which he had thrice gained the prize for racing in the Olympic games.[6]

[1] See Plutarch, *Roman Questions;* Cicero, *Pro Roscio*, XX; Livy, V, 47; Pliny, *Natural History*, X, 22.

[2] *Les mules et mulets.*

[3] See Plutarch, *Life of Cato the Censor.*

[4] See Diodorus Siculus, XIII, 82.

[5] See Herodotus, II, 66–69.

[6] See Plutarch, *Life of Cato the Censor;* Herodotus, VI, 103.

Xantippus of old had his dog buried on a headland of that sea-coast which has ever since been named therefor.[1] And with Plutarch it was a matter of conscience, he says, not to sell and send to the shambles, for a small profit, an ox which had long been useful to him.[2]

CHAPTER XII

APOLOGY FOR RAIMOND SEBOND[3]

It will be observed that this Introduction differs from the others in retaining the original form of the French quotations. This has been necessary, partly because this Essay has a peculiar interest from its relation to the *Pensées* of Pascal, and the original words of each author need to be compared.

This is by far the longest of Montaigne's Essays, and one of the most noted. It scarcely deserves the reputation it has gained, either for ability or as an expression of irreligion, and the point of view which regards it as peculiarly, though obscurely, expressive of Montaigne's character is open to question. In a sense it is almost out of place in the collection of Essays. It was a comparatively early piece of writing, and while nominally an "apology" for a certain author, it is, in fact, the formless, diffuse outpouring of Montaigne's opinions on many philosophical and religious matters with which his mind was not particularly fitted to deal, and to which his attention seems to have been accidentally turned. It is thus of a different quality from all the other Essays. Its interest to a reader to-day lies almost solely in its characteristic sincerity and in the remarkably modern nature of some of the opinions expressed in it, — also often characteristic of Montaigne's thought, — and in a few noble passages of religious feeling, which give proof of the deep foundations of Montaigne's morality. Its fate has been peculiar. It has been much misunderstood, greatly misrepresented, and warmly argued against.

The first thinker of importance who declared himself as an opponent of the thoughts of Montaigne in this Essay and elsewhere was Pascal, who was so familiar with them that they had become blood of his blood

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[1] The headland of the dog's burial. See Plutarch, *Life of Cato the Censor.* [2] See *Ibid.*

[3] Montaigne published in 1569 a translation of the work he here treats of (*Theologie Naturelle*), which, he says, he made at his father's request. The author's name appears as Sebon, Sebeyde, Sabonde, and de Sebonde; the date of his birth is not known; he died in 1432 at Toulouse, where he had professed medicine and theology.

and bone of his bone, and that he reproduces them when arguing against them.[1]

Pascal's opposition to Montaigne was, however, balanced by open admiration of him. But the associates of Pascal, the Port Royalists and their followers, echoing Pascal's cry of dismay at the absence in Montaigne of any religious emotion akin to their own high-strung consecration of their lives to asceticism and self-sacrifice, added to the note of dismay a note of indignant contempt, and uttered the epithet "Atheist," which was caught up and repeated generation after generation by those who did not themselves read Montaigne's writings, and knew him only by this deceptive hearsay.

Sixty years ago this report of him was renewed and affirmed by a man whom it is strange to find regarding him in this light, the admirable writer and thinker, Sainte-Beuve. When writing his great history of the Port Royalists, Sainte-Beuve — almost overmastered by the power of intellectual comprehension and moral sympathy that in later years obediently served him — looked at the world, as it were, through the windows of Port Royal; and through that distorting medium to see Montaigne truly or even distinctly was impossible; so that the vigour and ability with which Sainte-Beuve then depicted his figure served to present an image as incorrect as it was striking.

Afterward, the opinions of the eminent critic greatly changed; and though he never openly retracted his previous judgement, he showed an appreciation of the essayist so different as to amount to a practical recantation of it. But the impression of his earlier assertions on the reading public was not wholly corrected. Within the last few years, however, the defenders and admirers of Montaigne have been so numerous and so able that the legend of his irreligion and immorality is vanishing.

Emerson's designation of Montaigne, among his Representative Men, as the Sceptic, is likely to mislead those unfamiliar with the true sense of that word, but they will be set right by his definition of the type: "The ground occupied by the sceptic is the vestibule of the temple. Scepticism is the attitude assumed by the student in relation to the particulars which society adores, but which he sees to be reverend only in their tendency and spirit." This definition may be accepted as not inappropriate to the position of Montaigne.

In this Essay, — the "Apologie," — which was considered by Sainte-Beuve as an arsenal of weapons forged to war upon Religion, collected and wielded by a hypocritical, friendly-seeming enemy, to other minds there appears strong evidence, strongly confirmed by other portions of his writings, that, while Montaigne was far from being himself constantly guided by strictly religious principles, he did not question their essential validity, and, possessing a simple devoutness and reverence of feeling, he sincerely believed in the authority of the Church. It is to

[1] Sainte-Beuve remarked: "Les *Pensées* de Pascal, ne sont, à les bien prendre, que le chapitre de l' 'Apologie de Sebond' refait avec prud'homie."

be observed that the Church itself never took offence at this Essay. Immediately after the publication of the first edition of the Essays — in 1580 — Montaigne went to Rome, and while he was there his book was censured; but censured only for his use of the word "fortune," for his praises of the Emperor Julian the Apostate, and for his admiration of the heretic Théodore de Bèze as a poet, and other minor points. Nothing was said of the "Apologie" or of his opinions in general. And even these censures were soon withdrawn, and the authorities assured him that "they honoured his intentions and his affection for the Church, and his ability." [1]

The Essay before us is connected with the fact that Montaigne had been induced to make a translation of the work of which he styles himself the apologist, by circumstances which he narrates in the opening pages of the Essay. The book was so warmly approved by his father that he begged Michel to translate it. No man — not even so affectionate a son as Montaigne — is likely to translate a volume of one thousand solid pages merely to please his father; and it is fair to suppose that he also admired the book and sympathised with the author's object, which, he says, was "*par raisons humaines et naturelles, d'establir et verifier contre les atheistes tous les articles de la religion chretienne.*"

But the first clause of Montaigne's praise, where he says, "*Sa fin est hardie et courageuse,*" may be revised into a criticism, and one which is forced home to the reader of the "Apologie" far more distinctly than it was to Montaigne's own mind. The boldness of such attempts as that of Sebond appears nowadays as rashness; to Montaigne it seemed courageous only.

Montaigne was no logician, and consequently he was not perturbed by the immense assumptions with which Sebond starts, or by the colossal leaps his argument makes in reaching his conclusions. But he was a competent judge of honesty of purpose, and the heartfelt piety of the book, which the elder Montaigne had thought might make it a barrier against Lutheranism, inspired the translator with a respect that made him its apologist. But the whole situation was curious. It shows the perversity of even intelligent minds, that Lutheranism should have been regarded as one with atheism; Sebond's argument, composed in the middle of the fifteenth century, was in reality not opposed to the Reformation; and, had it been so, its force was greatly diminished by its apologist in the heat of his sympathetic admiration for it. The conditions are confused; it may be well to examine them in detail.

The two points that Montaigne felt called upon to answer in the objections made to the book were: first, that Christian belief is conceived by faith, and can not rest on reasoning, but comes from divine grace; and second, that Sebond's arguments are feeble and easily overthrown.

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[1] The Essays were not put on the Index Librum Prohibitorum till 1676.

These two points together, really, it may be seen, cover the whole contents of the volume, the value of which the translator had it at heart to maintain; but Montaigne was too unskilled a dialectician to perceive this, and believed himself to be concerned only with minor matters.

The first point (where he maintains that Christianity — or rather religious truth — can be at least supported by reason) becomes, if one treats as synonymous, as he does, the terms Truth and Faith, the matter one would think most needed defence against its opponents. But Montaigne seems to have considered it the most easy of defence, or, perhaps, we may believe he was less interested by the discussion of it than by that of the more personal question of his author's ability; for he devotes but about six times as many pages to the second point as to the first. But long before the last page one feels that he is not discussing, but simply discoursing.

It is to be remarked that throughout this Essay the corrections and additions of the later editions are not of a character to affect the thought;[1] yet his point of view had become very different from that of Sebond. His mind had run itself clear by the very process of expression; but it can easily be believed that he never cared to review his conclusions — all the more, because they took no formal or formulated shape to him. He did not himself know — if, indeed, he cared to know — what he believed. Belief, or faith, seemed to him above reason, but none the less to rest on that; inspired from above, it could derive strength from below.

In his discussion of his first point, he lays less stress on the connection between faith and reason than on the irreligion of his fellow Christians, eloquently maintaining that irreligion is irreverence to God; and declaring that this irreligion is because "we" accept our religion only from worldly motives, not with faith, whereas the knot that should join us to our Creator should be a divine and supernatural bond.

Then he makes one of his odd "turns," and goes on to say that not only our heart and soul but our brains should be at the service of our faith, and that, if a man will but look around him, he will find that the structure of the world bears imprints of the hand of the Great Architect; and that, if reasonings like those of Sebond be illumined by faith, they are capable of serving as guides in the right path.

When Montaigne comes to the second point, he seems to confuse somewhat those who declare the arguments of Sebond to be weak, with those who feel at liberty to fight against Christianity with merely human weapons; and he seems to think that he is answering the former as well as the latter (as indeed in one sense he is), by demonstrating the

[1] The author made very considerable additions before 1588; after that, but few. It may be observed that here, as elsewhere, all the illustrations from Plato, with scarcely an exception, are additions — and often not judicious. Montaigne did not study Plato till after 1588; and the note of the "Apologie" is not Platonic!

weakness of all human reason. And this is, in truth, the thesis of all the many following pages, in which it is set forth by every variety of illustration. Man, it is averred, has in his power no arguments stronger than those of Sebond; it is also averred that he can arrive at no certainty through reasoning. Montaigne does not perceive that this conclusion is fatal to Sebond's work.

The essayist begins by considering man in himself alone, man deprived of divine grace, and in an impressive passage he depicts "*cette miserable et chetive creature*," this quintessence of dust, and asks who has persuaded him that the glories of the universe, the mighty forces of nature which he can understand so little, and can command not at all, are for his sole advantage? At this early stage of the discussion Montaigne forsakes the path of Sebond, carried away, it would seem, by the force of his own thought and the power of his expression; for to his ironical questioning, who has persuaded man that he is of such immense importance? the immediate, natural answer of the reader of Sebond would be: Sebond has at least done his best to prove that the whole creation is for the benefit of man.

Montaigne even passes here into a fantastic consideration of the powers of the heavenly bodies, and in view of their influences and their incorruptible life he questions why we do not attribute to them a reasonable soul.

He then enters on an argument (if it may be so called by courtesy), which extends over many pages, to prove that it is only man's presumption that makes him count himself the superior of other creatures. He supports, or thinks he supports, his opinions by all sorts of illogical deductions from the stories in Plutarch's treatise on water and land animals, in Pliny's *Natural History*, in Herodotus, and other ancient authors. He is not to be blamed for not being wiser than his age on the matters he here treats of; but the fact that he was not deprives this part of the Essay of all interest but that of curiosity, for the modern "enlightened" reader.

As he draws to the close of these anecdotes, he remarks that, while we attribute to ourselves imaginary advantages — future and absent advantages — and the fictitious advantages of reason, learning, and honour, we recognise that beasts have the essential advantages of peace, security, innocence, and health. We have for our share the mass of human weaknesses and passions. And of what avail is learning against our human miseries?

His thought now becoming deeper, Montaigne questions what gain there is in intellectual attainments. Learning ("*la science*," philosophy) only by indirection brings us to the same ends that ignorance reaches directly, and ignorance is the more comfortable condition; witness the maladies caused and increased by the imagination, and the readiness with which the higher movements of the soul pass into madness.

The sovereign good is tranquillity; absence of ill, the best man can hope for; and to this *la simplesse* leads us, and learning itself throws us into the arms of ignorance by unavailing counsels of forgetfulness.

La simplesse renders life not only easier, but better; and knowledge is the root of evil; "*la simplicité* [*est*] *la meilleure sagesse.*" He here interpolates the consideration that, from the inadequacy of our powers to conceive the heights of the divine, it comes to pass that those works of our Creator which most fully express his nature are those which we least understand; and consequently an incredible thing is an occasion for belief: it is all the more according to reason as it is opposed to reason.

This leads to an interesting and modern passage — an expression of agnosticism: *c'est à Dieu seul de se cognoistre.*

Whatever knowledge we have of truth, it is not by ourselves that we have acquired it; our faith is a pure gift, and it is through our ignorance more than our learning that we are wise with this divine wisdom.

Recurring to the comparison of learning with ignorance, he declares that all the wisdom of the ages affirms the ignorance that is the wise child of learning: *Le plus sage homme qui fut oncques, quand on luy demanda ce qu'il sçavoit, respondit, Qu'il sçavoit cela, qu'il ne sçavoit rien.*

All philosophers may be divided into three schools: those who think they have discovered the truth; those who think it can not be discovered; those who are still looking for it. The Peripatetics, Epicureans, Stoics, and others — the Dogmatists, the Aristotelians — have believed it found; the Academicians and others have judged that it could not be attained by us; Pyrrho and other Sceptics have persisted in the search, using doubt for their instrument of investigation. Nothing in human invention has contained so much truthfulness and usefulness. Even the Dogmatists are forced at times to adopt Pyrrhonism and to distrust learning. The Academicians are sometimes "dogmatists," sometimes "doubters."

From this presentation of the schools of philosophy, Montaigne passes to the contemplation of the pleasure of study, even when vain, as useless knowledge is, and thence to the uselessness of the inventions of philosophers; or rather their vanity, since in the end truth must bend to the utility of action — to *la loy civile.*

In the course of these remarks, Montaigne quotes *un ancien*, who, reproached for making profession of philosophy when in truth he did not hold it in great account, answered, "*que cela c'etoit vrayment philosopher.*" Pascal echoes this phrase in a form that makes it applicable to Montaigne himself: *Se moquer de la philosophie, c'est vraiment philosopher.*

He turns a little aside to consider the attitude of philosophers regarding religion: *Platon dit tout destroussement en sa Republique, que, pour le profit des hommes il est souvent besoin de les piper.*[1] But it appears to

[1] Pascal, in a "*Pensée*" wholly made up of reminiscences of Montaigne, setting forth the disadvantages of examining into the sources of established customs, remarks: "C'est pourquoi le plus sage des législateurs disait que, pour la bien des hommes, il faut souvent les piper." — Vol. I, 39.

Montaigne that among the vain labours of the human understanding are the various conceptions of God; and he enters on a long enumeration of them, and reaches the conclusion that all other imaginations regarding the divine nature are less to be censured than those which represent it as resembling our own. When — *comme l'ancienneté* — we make to ourselves gods like ourselves, it is a marvellous madness. All his remarks on this subject are noble and interesting, and we have now reached a part of the Essay as interesting at one age of the world as another, since it is concerned with the unknowable.

Questioning whether philosophers of old could have been in earnest in what they said of their gods, Montaigne easily passes to the same question regarding what they said of the immortality awaiting us hereafter, and recognises at the same time that it is one in philosophic character with Christian beliefs. The pages on the impossibility of the union of the human and the divine might have been written yesterday, to-day, or to-morrow. Those who are in sympathy with them will always accept them; those whose minds have a different bent will always reject them with a certain regretful disapproval.

A very striking passage is that where he questions by what right the gods can punish or reward man hereafter if his conduct here is caused by them. The discussion of free will was in the air, though the question was as old as Epicurus, and it is evident that Montaigne had forgotten the premise, derived from Sebond, that incomprehensibility is the sustaining atmosphere of faith.

Recurring to heathen beliefs, he dwells on the strangeness of the fancy that divine benevolence can be pleased by our sufferings, and here as elsewhere one recognises that in criticising ancient customs he criticises the religion of his own day.

Carried along on the wings of his subject from one mountain top to another, so that it is impossible to follow him closely by the footpath of logical sequence, Montaigne next flies to the point he has already touched upon, that, because of the infinite difference between the divine nature and human nature, we can have no knowledge of the conditions of the universe. We prescribe rules to Nature though we know but a small portion of her operations, and even these rules of our making are infringed by many things that we see and that we call miraculous. Rather we should call every thing miraculous, since it is all beyond our comprehension.

There is, he declares, much reckless irreverence in the definiteness of many religious phrases. But language is full of weakness and inadequacy and lends itself easily to falsity and incomprehensibility. This passage about language is but a long parenthesis, though an important one; and Montaigne recurs to the impossibility of our understanding God, and of the folly of considering him akin to ourselves. These pages are made very confused by the insertion of a long addition, the close of which has no real connection with the text as originally printed. And there immediately follows a passage several pages long, added in 1588, which very much cumbers the ground. It treats of ancient deifications,

and the limitations of the powers of the gods and the consequent degradation of the idea of divinity,[1] emphasising again man's presumption in thinking that all things are for his sake, and the rashness of the human understanding.

This again is followed by an incongruous addition made in 1595, after which the Essay reverts to its controlling thought — that of the insufficiency of learning. "*La philosophie n'est qu'une poësie sophistiquée*," and has created unreasonable complications in the study of nature and man.

At the best it is difficult to know ourselves. Have those who find the reasoning of Sebond weak, and who themselves know every thing, have they never, busy with their books, discovered this difficulty?[2]

We receive ancient beliefs, and do not examine common opinions: presuppositions lead to mistakes; and philosophy fails to explain the perceptions of the senses.

Let us see if philosophy — reason — can tell us any thing of the soul. No; *ignoratur enim, quæ sit natura animai.*

In a digression on the vanity of philosophical enquiries in which he comments on the "man" of Plato, Montaigne refers to the "atoms" of the Epicureans, and classes the arguments regarding them as examples "*non d'arguments faux seulement mais ineptes.*"

Returning to the philosophical study of the soul, after considerations regarding its preëxistence come those regarding its immortality. He

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[1] "C'est pitié que nous nous pipons de nos propres singeries et inventions, comme les enfants qui s'effroyent de ce mesme visage qu'ils ont barbouillé et noircy à leur compaignon." — Cf. Pascal, who diminishes the force of this image by using it with regard to a gambler: "Il faut qu'il s'y échauffe et qu'il se pipe luy-même . . . afin qu'il se forme un sujet de passion, et qu'il excite sur cela son désir, sa colère, sa crainte, pour l'objet qu'il s'est formé, comme les enfants qui s'effraient du visage qu'ils ont barbouillé." — *Pensées*, vol. I, 52.

Montaigne took this image from Seneca (*Epistle* 24), Pascal from Montaigne.

[2] In speaking of the way in which the mind moves the body he says: "La nature de la liaison et couture de ces admirables ressorts, jamais hommé ne l'a sceu. 'Omnia incerta ratione et in naturæ majestate abdita,' dit Pline; et S. Augustin: 'Modus quo corporibus adhæret spiritus omnino mirus est, nec comprehendi ab homine potest, et hoc ipse homo est.' "— Cf. Pascal: "Qui ne croirait à nous voir composer toutes choses d'esprit et de corps, que ce mélange-là nous serait bien compréhensible? C'est néanmoins la chose qu'on comprend le moins. L'homme est à lui-même le plus prodigieux objet de la nature: car il ne peut concevoir ce que c'est que corps, et encore moins ce que c'est qu'esprit, et moins qu'aucune chose comment un corps peut être uni avec un esprit. C'est là le comble de ses difficultés, et cependant c'est son propre être: 'Modus quo corporibus adhæret spiritus comprehendi ab hominibus non potest: et hoc tamen homo est.' " — Vol. I, 8.

remarks: *Ils* [les philosophes] *ont ce dilemme tousjours en la bouche pour consoler nostre mortelle condition: "Ou l'ame est mortelle ou immortelle: si mortelle elle sera sans peine; si immortelle, elle ira en amendant." Ils ne touchent jamais l'autre branche: "Quoy, si elle va en empirant?"*

Reason, it is evident, can not convince us of the immortality of the soul. But, though reason is feeble, man is presumptuous, and Montaigne exclaims: *Ce saint* [Augustine] *m'a faict grand plaisir: Ipsa utilitatis occultatio aut humilitatis exercitatio est aut elationis adtritio.*

Reason knows no more about the corporeal than the spiritual part of man; philosophers can not agree regarding human generation.

But if we know not ourselves, what can we know?

A paragraph now occurs that has almost the nature of an *envoi*. Montaigne here warns some one, individually addressed, against making use in the defence of Sebond of this "*dernier tour d'escrime*" which Montaigne has himself employed — this assertion of the feebleness, the incompetency, of human reason: *Nous secouons icy les limites et dernieres clostures des sciences, ausquelles l'extremite est vicieuse, comme en la vertu.*[1]

The next paragraph might be the opening of an Essay entitled "De l'insuffisance de nos propres moyens pour saisir la vérité," since it deals with the uncertainties, not of our reason alone, but also of our senses. In the pages that follow there is one allusion to Sebond, and the style differs from the preceding pages in the constant occurrence of that personal note so characteristic of Montaigne's usual writing. He here goes over part of the same ground just traversed, but in a more interesting and vigorous manner, and these pages are free from the mass of untrustworthy, and often almost puerile, borrowed matter that crowds and clogs those that go before. They take up again the question of the limits of human knowledge, opening with the assertion that if the soul (reason) knows neither itself not its body, it knows nothing with certainty; if we know any truth "*c'est par hasard.*"

This is followed by a fresh account of the sects of the philosophers, the Academicians and the wiser Pyrrhonists. But soon we leave *cette infinie confusion d'opinions qui se void entre les philosophes mesmes*, and enter on the consideration of the uncertainty that every man perceives in himself. Truth is the direct gift of God: it can not be conveyed from man to man.

It is certain that the faculties of the soul are affected by the conditions of the body, and the consequent inequalities of a man's state.

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[1] An unquestioned tradition has existed for two hundred years and more that this warning was addressed to Marguerite de Valois, the wife of Henri IV. But there is no evidence in support of this tradition, and there is little likelihood of its truth. On the contrary, there is reason to believe that the Essay was presented to the sister of Henri IV, Catherine de Bourbon.

Even the state of the weather changes our conditions, as says that verse in Cicero from the Greek:

> Tales sunt hominum mentes, quali pater ipse
> Juppiter auctifera lustravit lampade terras.

The reason — *c'est un instrument de plomb et de cire, alongeable, ployable;* and the weakness of the judgement is shown again by the power that mere assertion, even by oneself, has over one's mind.

The fact that our passions often inspire noble actions beyond reason impels us to ask (Montaigne implies) if such actions in which our judgement has no part are more excellent than its dictates, what advantage do we derive from the judgement?

The passion of love is a familiar example of the intoxication of the judgement: and who shall say whether the lover or the same man when he is not in love sees things most truly?

These considerations have led Montaigne, he says, to be slow to embrace new opinions; we have great reason to distrust them. *Je me tiens en l'assiette ou Dieu m'a mis. Ainsi me suis-je, par la grace de Dieu, conservé pur et entier sans agitation et trouble de conscience, aux anciennes creances de nostre religion, au travers de tant de sectes et de divisions que nostre siecle a produittes* (1588).

The truths of geometry, he goes on, subvert the truths of experience; but many things formerly held as truths of cosmography are on the other hand subverted by the truths of experience.

A long passage was here inserted in 1595, about the various opinions regarding the world, which confuses, as usual, the train of thought, all the more that it is inserted in a passage which very irrelevantly concerns itself with the idea of Epicurus that similar opinions to those that exist in this world exist also in other worlds. Montaigne thinks Epicurus would have been the more convinced of this had he seen the similarities of belief to be found in the New World and the Old; which he goes on to point out. All this was written after the first publication of the Essay, and before the (so-called) fifth edition, that is, between 1580 and 1588; and it has the least possible connection with the original current of thought of the Essay.

After the interruption of this insertion we return to *autres tesmoignages de nostre imbecillitê;* one of which is the variableness of man's desires; he himself had wanted the Order of Saint-Michel.

Then, after some questioning regarding the sovereign good of man, and the opinions of philosophers about it, a point *duquel par le calcul de Varro nasquirent deux cents quatre vingt sectes*, he remarks that from this diversity of opinion regarding the sovereign good arises the universal confusion in customs and laws, and that the most reasonable course, *c'est generalement à chacun d'obeir aux lois de son pays.* Yet what does this mean — save that duty has but a fortuitous rule?

We now come to a passage of considerable length about laws, one of the many interesting evidences in the Essays of how seriously Montaigne's mind had been given to the significance and the authority of

human laws — his attention, perhaps, having been especially directed to the subject by his avocations as *conseiller*. The consideration of the varyingness and changeableness of laws of nations leads him to consider the question of natural laws inherent in human nature, and to argue against their existence, at least against their present existence, even if man has been subjected to them in the past, as other creatures are now.

"Il est croyable," he says, "qu'il y a quelques loix naturelles, comme il se voit és autres creatures; mais en nous elles sont perdues, cette belle raison humaine s'ingerant par tout de maistriser et commander, brouillant et confondant le visage des choses selon sa vanité et inconstance; *nihil itaque amplius nostrum est, quod nostrum dico, artis est. . . .*

"Une nation regarde un subjet par un visage, et s'arreste à celuy là; l'autre par un autre."

After this he dwells on "the extreme confusion of judgements" arising in "*une science si infinie*," and reaches the weighty and important conclusions that he thus expresses:

"Les loix prennent leur autorité de la possession et de l'usage: il est dangereux de les ramener à leur naissance: elles grossissent et s'ennoblissent en roulant, comme nos rivieres; suyvez les contremont jusque à leur source, ce n'est qu'un petit surjon d'eau à peine reconnoissable, qui s'enorgueillit ainsin et se fortifie en vieillissant. Voyez les anciennes considerations qui ont donné le premier branle à ce fameux torrent, plein de dignité, d'horreur et de reverence; vous les trouverez si legeres et si delicates, que ces gens icy qui poisent tout et le ramenent à la raison . . . il n'est pas merveille s'ils ont leur jugements souvent tres-eloignez des jugements publiques."

How familiar through life such thoughts were to Montaigne's mind is made evident by bringing into connection with this passage in this early Essay the following lines from the last of all the Essays:

"Or les loix se maintiennent en credit non par ce qu'elles sont justes, mais par ce qu'elles sont loix: c'est la fondement mystique de leur authorité, elles n'en ont poinct d'autre. Et quiconque obeyt à la loy par ce qu'elle est juste, ne luy obeyt pas justement par où il doibt."

The next pages in the "Apologie" recur again to the confusion of judgements, and connect with this the fact that there may be a thousand interpretations of the same words; from which Montaigne slips, by way, again, of differences of judgements, into *la consideration des sens*, the concluding topic of the Essay.

He dwells first on his doubt whether man *soit pourveu de tout sens naturels;* and then on the recognised *incertitude et faiblesse de nos sens*, in spite of which *la force et l'effect des sens* is all powerful.

A passage added here in 1595, and another previously added in 1588, confuse the connection. But *cette mesme piperie que les sens apportent à nostre entendement, ils le recoivent à leur tour; nostre ame par fois s'en revenche de mesme: ils mentent et se trompent à l'envy.*

In fine, we sleep when we wake, and wake when we sleep. *Ceux qui ont apparié nostre vie à un songe ont eu de la raison à l'advanture plus qu'ils ne pensaient.*

He then suggests that there is probably great difference between our senses and those of animals; and that to judge of our senses we ought to know more about these differences and those that it is probable exist between different human beings; also it is to be noted that our different senses bear different testimony of the same objects. And who can judge of all these differences?

Though *toute cognoissance s'achemine en nous par les sens*, yet such is their uncertainty that it *rend incertain tout ce qu'ils produisent . . . et nous, et nostre jugement et toutes choses mortelles, vont coulant et roulant sans cesse.*[1]

In truth we have no communication with any constant existence — *nous n'avons aucune communication à l'estre;* and at the close of the Essay is a long quotation from Plutarch on the incessant progressive changes of Nature, one thing becoming always another, so that God alone is. Montaigne, as his last words, comments on the saying of Seneca: "*O la vile chose et abjecte, que l'homme, s'il ne s'esleve au dessus de l'humanite.*" Man can not of himself, says Montaigne in effect, rise above himself and humanity, but he may be uplifted by the hand of God; and it is Christian faith, not stoical virtue, that works this miracle.

A careful study of these pages makes it almost certain that a considerable portion of its substance was composed as early as 1572, seven or eight years before it was first printed in 1580, and it is to be seen that between the edition of that year and the edition of 1588 Montaigne still made additions, interposing them here and there among the earlier portions. From this the important fact results that this "Apologie" is not a whole, conceived at once, in which the parts were naturally united and closely dependent on each other, but rather a large frame in which Montaigne placed from time to time his successive ideas regarding the weakness of human reason.

When he wrote the latest words, he was on a higher plane than when he entered on the subject.

The Credulity of Montaigne

It is curious to observe the great confidence that Montaigne places in human testimony. There is, however, nothing contradictory in this to his general mental attitude of suspense of judgement, and it is fully

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[1] Cf. Pascal: "Nous voguons sur un milieu vaste, toujours incertains et flottants, poussés d'un bout vers l'autre. Quelque terme où nous pensions nous attacher et nous affermir, il branle et nous quitte: et si nous le suivons, il échappe à nos prises, nous glisse et fuit d'une fuite eternelle. Rien ne s'arrête pour nous. C'est l'état qui nous est naturel, et toutefois le plus contraire à notre inclination; nous brûlons de désir de trouver une assiette ferme et une dernière base constante, pour y édifier une tour qui s'élève à l'infini; mais tout notre fondement craque, et la terre s'ouvre jusqu'aux abîmes." — Vol. I, 5.

explained in the Essay on the folly of considering our knowledge as a measure of the true and false.[1] It was a part of his perpetual *Que sçais-je?* which made it not difficult to him to look at the impossible as possible. To-day even, the limits for the impossible are very vague to untrained minds; and in Montaigne's day of scientific ignorance there can have been no fixed limits to a thinker who, like Montaigne, had emancipated himself from dependence on the evidence of the senses, or on his personal experience. That he did not reject the inexplicable is never more apparent than in view of the credulity with which he listened to the voice of history. The degree of his belief varied, not according to the character of the facts, but according to the character of the witnesses. Froissart and "our annals" did not seem to him witnesses of sufficient weight to control our judgement and to take from us freedom of question — *pour nous tenir en bride;* but when Plutarch affirms as of his certain knowledge that a battle lost in Germany two hundred and fifty leagues from Rome was known of in Rome the same day, and when Cæsar declared that an incident is often forerun by knowledge of it, "Shall we say," asks Montaigne, "that these honest folk [*ces simples gents*] were deceived and were not as clear-sighted as we?" And when St. Augustine testifies to miracles seen by himself, and brings forward two holy bishops as also witnesses to them, "Shall we accuse them," he asks again, "of ignorance, stupidity, carelessness, or of cunning and imposture? Is there any man of these days so impudently conceited as to think himself comparable to them in virtue and piety, or in learning, judgement, and ability?"

He writes thus of Tacitus: "He may be thought bold in the statements he makes: as when he declares that a soldier bearing a load of wood had his hands so stiffened with cold and so glued to his burden that they remained fastened there and dead, having separated from the arms. I am wont to bow before the authority of so weighty a witness."

Montaigne's mind was balanced between credulity and scepticism. By nature he inclined, or was not always disinclined, to believe; by intelligence he learned to distrust. The contrast in this respect of his later thought with his earlier is marked in one of the last Essays, that entitled "Des Boiteux," of which Voltaire said: *Qui veut apprendre à douter doit lire ce chapitre de Montaigne, le moins méthodique des philosophes, mais le plus sage et le plus aimable.* Here Montaigne remarks that men are generally more ready to seek the cause of an alleged fact than to question its truth: *Ils commencent ordinairement ainsi: "Comment est ce que cela se faict?" "Mais se faict il?" faudrait il dire.* He goes on: *J'ay veu la naissance de plusieurs miracles de mon temps. Encore qu'ils s'estoufent en naissant, nous ne laissons pas de prevoir le train qu'ils eussent pris s'ils eussent vescu leur aage.* And, speaking of sorcerers reported to be seen one day in the East and the next day in the West: *Certes, je ne m'en croirais pas moymesme;* it is much more likely that two men lie than that another flies like the wind.

[1] Book I, chap. 27.

But if we turn back to the early Essay already quoted from, we find him saying, not less wisely, that it is foolish presumption but a common vice in those who think they have better brains than most, to judge that to be false which does not seem to them probable. "I used to be so minded myself," he says, "and if I heard some one talk of spirits returning, or of prognostications of future things, of enchantments, or sorceries, or tell some other tale of which I could make nothing, —

Somnia, terrores magicos, miracula, sagas,
Nocturnos lemures, portentaque Thessala,—

I felt compassion for the poor people deceived by such follies. And now I think that I was at least as much to be pitied myself; not that experience has since then shewn me any thing beyond my former beliefs . . . but reason has taught me that to condemn a thing so positively as false and impossible is to assume the advantage of knowing the boundaries and limits of the will of God and of the power of our mother Nature, and that there is no more notable foolishness in the world than to measure these by our capacity and intelligence."

Bacon agreed with him. "Neither," says he, "am I of opinion in this history of marvels that superstitious narratives of sorceries, witchcrafts, charms, dreams, divinations, and the like, where there is an assurance and clear evidence of the fact, should be altogether excluded. For it is not yet known in what cases, and how far, effects attributed to superstition participate of natural causes." [1]

IN truth, learning is a very useful and powerful ally; they who scorn it prove thereby their stupidity; yet I do not estimate its value as of such extreme importance as is attributed to it by some, like Herillus the philosopher, who placed therein the sovereign good, and maintained that it was in its power to make us wise and happy.[2] This I do not believe, nor what others have said, that learning is the mother of all virtue and that vice is engendered by ignorance. If this be true, it is in need of a long interpretation.

My house has long been open to learned men and is very well known to them; for my father, who ruled it fifty years and more, inflamed by that new ardour with which King Francis the First embraced letters and brought them into esteem, sought with great zeal and expense the acquaintance of learned men, receiving them beneath his roof as

[1] See translation of the *De Augmentis*, Bacon's Works, IV, 296, ed. Spedding.

[2] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Herillus;* Cicero, *Academica*, II, 42 and *De Fin.*, II, 13.

sanctified persons who had some peculiar inspiration of divine wisdom, gathering their remarks and discourses as oracles, and with so much the more reverence and devout regard as he had less capacity to judge them; for he had no knowledge of letters, (*b*) any more than his predecessors. (*a*) For my part, I care much for them, but I do not adore them. Among others, Pierre Bunel,[1] a man of great reputation for learning in his time, having stayed some days, with other men of his sort, at Montaigne with my father, presented him, when going away, with a book entitled: "Theologia naturalis sive liber creaturarum magistri Raymondi de Sabonde." And because my father was familiar with the Italian and Spanish languages, and because this book is composed in a sort of Latinised Spanish, he hoped that, with very little assistance, he[2] could turn it to his advantage, and commended it to him as a very useful book, and well suited to the times in which he gave it to him; it was when the new doctrine of Luther was beginning to gain credit, and in many places to stagger our ancient faith. Wherein he was very well advised, foreseeing, by discourse of reason, that this beginning of disease would easily decline to an execrable atheism; for the vulgar[3] not having the ability to judge things in themselves, and being carried on by chance and by appearances, after the courage has come to them to despise and criticise the opinions which they had formerly held in extreme reverence, as those which have to do with their salvation; and when some articles of their religion have come to be questioned and weighed, they at once lightly cast into like uncertainty all the other parts of their belief, which had no more authority or foundation in their minds than those which had been shaken; and they throw off, as a tyrannical yoke, all the impressions which they had received from the authority of the laws or respect for ancient usage, —

(*b*) Nam cupide concultatur nimis ante metutum;[4]

[1] One of the ablest Ciceronians of the sixteenth century (1499–1546). His visit to the Château de Montaigne was probably in 1544.

[2] Montaigne *père*.

[3] In 1580 to 1588: (*et tout le monde est quasi de ce genre*).

[4] For that is eagerly trampled on which before was too much dreaded. — Lucretius, V, 1140.

(*a*) resolving thenceforth to accept nothing to which they have not given their sanction [1] and yielded special consent.

Now, a few days [2] before his death, my father, having by chance found this book under a pile of other neglected papers, bade me put it into French for him. It is easy to translate authors like this one, in whom there is little save the matter to set forth; but those who have much ministered to grace of style and elegance of language are dangerous to undertake; (*c*) especially to render in a weaker idiom. (*a*) It was a very strange and novel occupation for me; but being, by chance, at leisure at the time, and being unable to refuse any thing to the bidding of the best father that ever was, I accomplished it as I could; in which he took a peculiar pleasure and ordered that it should be printed; this was done after his death.[3]

I found this author's ideas excellent, the structure of the work well carried out, and his plan full of piety. Forasmuch as many persons take pleasure in reading it, and especially ladies, to whom we owe the most service, I have often found myself able to assist them by exonerating the book from two main objections that are made to it. Its purpose is bold and courageous, for it undertakes, by human and natural arguments, to establish and verify against atheists all the articles of the Christian religion; wherein, truly, I find it so solid and so successful that I do not think it possible to do better in that argument, and I believe that no one has equalled him. As this work seems to me too full of matter and too fine for an author whose name is so little known, and of whom all we know is that he was a Spaniard teaching medicine at Toulouse about two hundred years since,[4]

[1] *Il* [*le vulgaire*] *nait interposé son decret.*

[2] The phrase *quelques jours* is one of the countless illustrations of how little Montaigne's indications of the lapse of time can be taken literally; for a few lines farther on he speaks of the great pleasure his father took in the accomplishment of his work; and the translation of a thousand octavo pages could not be achieved — least of all, by Montaigne — in "a few days."

[3] In 1580–1588: *avec la nonchalance qu'on void, par l'infini nombre des fautes, que l'imprimeur y laissa, qui en eust la conduite, luy seul.*

[4] Another of Montaigne's bad inaccuracies about time. It was only some 140 years. There were only 90 years between the publication of Sebond's work and that of Montaigne's translation.

I enquired in other days of Adrian Turnebus, who knew every thing, what might be the nature of this book. He replied that he believed its essential part to be derived from Saint Thomas Aquinas; for in truth that mind, full of infinite erudition, and of a marvellous subtlety, was alone capable of such ideas. However that may be, and whoever is their author and inventor (and there is no justice in depriving Sebond of that title without some greater occasion), it was a very able man, possessing many noble qualities.

The first censure that is made regarding his work is that Christians wrong themselves in desiring to support their belief by human reasons, since it is conceived only by faith and by a special inspiration of divine favour. In this objection it seems that there may be some pious zeal, and therefore we must try with all the more gentleness and respect to satisfy those who put it forward. This would better be the office of a man versed in theology than for me, who therein know nothing. However, I thus conceive, that in a matter so divine and so lofty and so far surpassing human intelligence as is this truth with which it has pleased the goodness of God to enlighten us, there is great need that he still lend us his aid with extraordinary and peculiar favour, to enable us to conceive it and implant it in ourselves. And I do not believe that purely human agencies are in any wise capable thereof; for if they were, so many rare and superior souls in ancient times, so abundantly supplied with natural powers, would not have failed, by their reasoning, to attain this knowledge. It is faith alone which grasps vividly and certainly the high mysteries of our religion. But this is not to say that it is not a very fine and very praiseworthy undertaking to adapt also to the service of our faith the natural and human instruments which God has given us. It must not be doubted that it is the most honourable use to which we could apply them, and that there is no occupation and no purpose more worthy a Christian man than to aim by all his studies and reflections to embellish, to extend, and to amplify the truth of his faith. We do not content ourselves by serving God in mind and soul: we owe him also, and render to him, a corporeal homage; we dispose even our limbs and our motions and external things to do him honour. We must needs do the like here

and accompany our faith with all the reasoning power that is in us; but always with this understanding, that we do not think it is on us that it depends, or that our efforts and arguments can attain a knowledge so supernatural and divine. If it does not enter into us by an infusion of peculiar nature; if it enters, not only by way of the reason, but also by human influences, we have it not in its dignity or in its splendour.

And truly I fear, howsoever, that we possess it in that way only. If we held fast to God through the mediation of a lively faith; if we held fast to God through himself, not through ourselves; if we had a divine base and foundation, human chances would not have the power to stagger us as they do; our fortress would not then surrender to so feeble an assault; the love of novelty, the compulsion of princes, the good fortune of a faction, the reckless and haphazard changing of our opinions [1] would not have the power to disturb and alter our belief; we should not let it be troubled at the will and pleasure of a new argument and by persuasion — no, not by that of all the rhetoric that ever was; we should sustain these surges with inflexible and immovable firmness, —

> Illisos fluctus rupes ut vasta refundit,
> Et varias circum latrantes dissipat undas
> Mole sua.[2]

If this ray from the divine being touched us at all, it would appear in us everywhere; not our words alone, but our deeds as well, would have the glow and lustre of it. Whatever proceeded from us would be seen to be illuminated by this noble light. We ought to take shame to ourselves that in human sects there was never a partisan, whatever difficulty and unfamiliarity his doctrine might maintain, who did not in some sort conform his behaviour and his life to it; and so divine and celestial an institution [3] sets a mark upon Christians only in their speech.

[1] That is, political opinions.

[2] As a huge rock drives back the broken billows, and by its mass dissipates the roaring waves around it. — An imitation (author unknown) of Virgil, *Æneid*, VII, 587, in a poem *In laudem Ronsardi*.

[3] That is, Christianity.

(*b*) Would you see this? Compare our character with that of a Mohammedan or a pagan: you will always find it beneath his; whereas, having regard to the superiority of our religion, we ought to shine with an extreme and incomparable difference of excelling worth; and men should say: "Are they so just, so charitable, so good? Then they are Christians." (*c*) All other signs are common to all religions: hope, confidence, important occurrences,[1] ceremonies, penitence, martyrs. The peculiar mark of our truth [2] should be our virtue, since it is, moreover, the most heavenly and most difficult mark, and since it is the most worthy product of the truth. (*b*) Therefore our good St. Louis was well advised, when that King of the Tartars, who had become a Christian, proposed to go to Lyons to kiss the feet of the Pope, and to observe there the sanctity that he hoped to find in our manners and morals, to dissuade him urgently from so doing, for fear lest our reckless manner of living should, on the contrary, make distasteful to him so holy a belief.[3] Yet afterwards it fell out quite otherwise in the case of that other, who, having gone to Rome for the same end, when he observed there the dissoluteness of the prelates and people of that time, was all the more firmly established in our religion, from considering what great strength and divineness of character it must have, to maintain its dignity and splendour amidst so much corruption and in such sinful hands.[4]

(*a*) Had we but a single grain of faith, we should move mountains from their foundations, says the Holy Word;[5] our actions, which would be guided and accompanied by the divine being, would not be merely human: they would have in them something miraculous, like our belief. (*c*) *Brevis est institutio vitæ honestæ beatæque, si credas.*[6] Some men persuade the world that they believe what they do not believe. Others, in greater numbers, persuade themselves of this, not being able to search out what it is to believe. (*a*) And

[1] *Evenements.* This word seems out of place in this list.

[2] That is, of the truth of our religion.

[3] Cf. *Mémoires de Joinville*, XIX.

[4] See Boccaccio, *Decameron*, First Day, *Novella* 2.

[5] See *Matthew*, 17, 20.

[6] The formation of an honourable and happy life is soon done by one who believes. — Quintilian, XII, 11.

it seems to us strange if, in the wars which now lie heavy on our state, we see success waver and change in a common and ordinary way. It is because we bring to them only ourselves. Justice, which is with one of the parties, is there only as an ornament and a shield; it is alleged to be there, indeed, but it is neither received there, nor given a place, nor espoused; it is there as in the mouth of a lawyer, not as in the heart and affection of the party. God promises[1] his peculiar aid to faith and religion,[2] not to our passions. Men are herein[3] directors and herein make use of religion.[4] It should be just the opposite. (*c*) Observe if it be not guided by our hands, to create, as if it were of wax, countless diverse shapes from an ordinance so unswerving and so firm. When was this seen more clearly than in France in our day? Those who have regarded it from one point of view, those who have regarded it from another, those who say it is black, those who say it is white, all employ it in such similar fashion in their violent and ambitious enterprises, and therein conduct themselves in a course so similar in dissoluteness and injustice, that they render doubtful and hard to credit the diversity that they assert of their opinions about matters upon which depend the guidance and regulation of our lives. Can there be seen to issue from one and the same school and teaching, ways of thinking more akin, more identical?

Observe the horrible impudence with which we toss to and fro[5] the divine justifications, and how irreligiously we have cast them aside and taken them up again according as chance has changed our position in these public storms. The so momentous question, whether it be lawful for a subject to rebel and take arms against his prince in defence of religion — remember in what mouths this last year the affirmative was the buttress of one party, and of what other party the negative was the buttress; and listen now from what quarter comes the cry and the teaching of the one and the other;

[1] *Doibt* in all editions except that of Lyons, 1595, which has *promist*, which is clearly the meaning.

[2] That is, piety.

[3] That is, in the wars of that time.

[4] That is, belief in divine guidance.

[5] *De quoi nous pelotons.*

and whether arms clash less loudly for this cause than for that.[1] And we burn those who say that we must needs make the truth submit to the yoke of our need; and how much worse does France do than say it!

(*a*) Let us confess the truth: he who should cull from the army, even on the legitimate side,[2] those who march therein solely from the zeal of religious emotion, together with those who consider only protecting the laws of their country or the service of their chief, would not be able to form with them a full company of men-at-arms. Whence comes it that there are to be found so few men who have throughout maintained the same mind and the same activity [3] in our public commotions, and that we see them sometimes going but at a foot-pace, sometimes galloping at full speed? and, likewise, men sometimes ruining our affairs by their violence and vehemence, sometimes by their coldness, slackness, and heaviness, unless it be that they are impelled by private and casual considerations, according to whose diversity they are actuated? (*c*) I see this clearly, that we give nothing readily to religion save the services that flatter our feelings. There is no hostility that surpasses that of a Christian.[4] Our zeal does marvels when it seconds our inclination to hatred, cruelty, ambition, avarice, slander, rebellion. Quite oppositely, toward kindness, benignity, temperance, — unless as by miracle some rare disposition direct, — it moves neither hand nor foot.[5] Our religion is formed to extirpate vices; it shelters them, fosters them, encourages them.

(*a*) We must not *faire barbe de foarre à* [6] God, as they say. If we believed in him, I do not say with faith, but with simple belief, indeed (and I say this to our great confounding),

[1] "This passage must have been written in the last half of 1589 or in 1590. In the lifetime of King Henri III, who was assassinated May 31, 1589, it was the Protestants who asserted the right to take arms against the king, and the Catholics denied that theory. After the death of Henri III, when a Protestant, Henri IV, succeeded him on the throne, the positions were reversed." — M. Villey.

[2] *De l'armée, mesmes legitime:* that is, even the army of the King. In 1580–1588: *de nos armées.*

[3] *Progrez* = advance forward.

[4] *Il n'est point d'hostilité excellante comme la chrestiene.*

[5] *Il ne va ny de pied n'y d'aile.*

[6] Mock at.

if we believed in him as in other history, as in one of our comrades, we should love him above all other things for the infinite goodness and beauty which shines forth in him; at least, he would stand in the same rank in our affections with riches, pleasure, glory, and our friends. (*c*) The best of us does not shrink from wronging him as he shrinks from wronging his neighbour, his kinsman, his master. Is there any intelligence so shallow that, having on one side the object of one of our vicious pleasures, and on the other, in equal knowledge and inducement, the prospect of immortal glory, would think of bartering the one for the other? And yet we often renounce this [1] from pure contempt; for what desire attacks us to blasphemy unless, perchance, the desire of the offence itself? When the philosopher Antisthenes was being initiated in the mysteries of Orpheus, the priest saying to him that those who devoted themselves to religion would receive, after their death, eternal and perfect bliss, "Why, then, do you not die yourself?" he asked.[2] Diogenes, more roughly, after his fashion, — and outside of our subject, — answered the priest who exhorted him, in like manner, to join his order to attain the bliss of the other world: "You would not have me believe that Agesilaus and Epaminondas, such great men, will be miserable, and that you, ass that you are, will be perfectly happy because you are a priest?" [3]

(*a*) These great promises of eternal beatitude — if we received them as of like authority with a philosophical argument, we should not hold death in such horror as we do.

(*b*) Non jam se moriens dissolvi conquereretur;
Sed magis ire foras, vestemque relinquere, ut anguis,
Gauderet, prælonga senex aut cornua cervus.[4]

(*a*) I would be dissolved, we should say, and be with Jesus Christ.[5] The force of Plato's discourse on the immortality

[1] That is, immortal glory.

[2] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Antisthenes*.

[3] See Idem, *Life of Diogenes*.

[4] Then the dying man would no longer lament his dissolution; but rather he would rejoice to go hence, to leave his mortal remains as the serpent changes his skin, and as the stag, grown old, sheds his too long horns. — Lucretius, III, 613. The last line is not in modern texts.

[5] See *Philippians*, I, 23. The Vulgate reads: *desiderium habens dissolvi, et esse cum Christo*.

of the soul [1] urged some of his disciples to their deaths, the sooner to enjoy the hope that he gave them.

All this is a very manifest indication that we receive our religion only in our own fashion and by our own hands, and not otherwise than as other religions are received. We chance to be dwellers in the country where it is practised; where we are influenced by its antiquity or by the authority of the men who have upheld it; where we fear the menaces that it addresses to unbelievers, or are allured by its promises. Such considerations as these must be made use of in our belief, but as subsidiary: they are human connections.[2] Another country, other testimony, similar promises and menaces might, by the same means, impress on us a very different belief. (*b*) We are Christians by the same title that we are Perigordins or Germans.

(*a*) And as to what Plato says, that there are few men so confirmed in atheism that an imminent danger does not bring them to the recognition of the divine power, that category does not include a true Christian. It is for mortal and human religion to be received through human guidance. What sort of faith must that be which cowardice and faintheartedness implant and establish in us! (*c*) A droll faith, which believes what it believes only from lack of courage to disbelieve it. (*a*) An unsound perturbation, like mutability and mental agitation — can this create in our soul any well-ordered production? (*c*) They established, he says, by the reasoning of their judgement, that what is said of the lower regions and of future punishment is deceitful. But the occasion for testing this presenting itself when age or sicknesses bring them near their death, terror of that fills them with a new belief, from their alarm about their future condition.[3] And because such impressions make men's hearts fearful, he forbids in his laws all teaching of such menaces and inducing them to believe [4] that there can come to man any evil from the gods, except for his greater good, when oc-

[1] The *Phædo*. The allusion is to the story of Cleombrotus, who killed himself after reading the *Phædo*. See Book II, chap. 3, p. 78 of this volume.

[2] *Liaisons*.

[3] See Plato, *Republic*, book I.

[4] *Et la persuasion*.

casion arises, and with a curative purpose.[1] It is narrated of Bion that, being infected with the atheistical ideas of Theodorus, he had long been in the habit of scoffing at devout men; but that, death taking him by surprise, he gave himself up to the most extreme superstitions, as if the gods withdrew and reappeared according as it concerned Bion.[2]

Plato and these examples would lead us to the conclusion that we are brought to belief in God either by reason or by force. Atheism being a proposition of an unnatural and unfamiliar kind, and a hard matter also and not easy to establish in the human mind, however insolent and unruly that may be, there are not lacking those who, from vanity and from being proud of holding views that are unusual and reformatory of the world, affect to profess them for appearance's sake,[3] who, if they are foolish enough, are not strong enough to have routed them inwardly.[4] Consequently, they do not fail to lift their hands to heaven if you give them an honest sword-thrust in the breast. And when fear or illness shall have abated and dulled this unbridled fervour of flighty humour, they will not fail to retrace their steps and allow themselves very discreetly to take hold of common beliefs and examples. A seriously considered opinion is one thing; a different thing are these superficial impressions which, being born of the wandering of a disordered mind, swim recklessly and uncertainly in the fancy. Wretched men, indeed, and senseless, who try to be worse than they can be!

(*b*) The false beliefs [5] of paganism, and ignorance of our sacred truth, allowed that great soul of Plato — but great with human greatness alone — to fall also into this other kindred fallacy, that children and old people are more capable of religion; as if it were born and won belief from our weakness. (*a*) The bond which should link together our judgement and our will, which should hold fast [6] our soul and join it to our Creator, should be a bond receiving its strands and its strength, not from our afflictions, from our

[1] See Plato, *Republic*, book III.
[2] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Bion.*
[3] *Par contenance.*
[4] *Pour l'avoir plantée en leur conscience pourtant.*
[5] *L'erreur.* [6] *Estreindre.*

reasoning and emotions, but from a divine and supernatural compulsion,[1] having but one form, one aspect, and one splendour, which is the authority and the grace of God. Now, our heart and our soul being ruled and commanded by faith, it is reasonable that faith should draw into the service of her scheme all our other faculties according to their capacity. Also, it is not to be believed that this whole machine [2] has not some marks stamped by the hand of its great architect, and that there is not, in the things of this world, some image resembling, after a sort, the workman who built and shaped them. He has left on these high works the impress of his divinity, and it is due solely to our weakness that we can not discover it. This is what he himself says to us, that he manifests to us his invisible operations by visible ones. Sebond laboured at this admirable study, and shows us that there is no member of the world which belies its maker. It would wrong the divine goodness if the universe did not accord with our belief. Heaven, earth, the elements, our body and our soul, all things conspire in this; there needs only to find the way to make use of them. They instruct us, if we are capable of understanding. (*b*) For this world is a very sacred temple, into which man is introduced to contemplate images, not the work of mortal hand, but such as the divine mind has made objects of sense, — the sun, the stars, the waters, and the land, — thereby to represent to us those things that are objects of the intelligence.[3] (*a*) The invisible things of God, says St. Paul, are manifest from the creation of the world; his eternal wisdom and his divinity from his work.[4]

> Atque adeo faciem cœli non invidet orbi
> Ipse Deus, vultusque suos corpusque recludit
> Semper volvendo; seque ipsum inculcat et offert,
> Ut bene cognosci possit, doceatque videndo
> Qualis eat, doceatque suas attendere leges.[5]

[1] *Estreinte.* [2] That is, the world's frame.

[3] See Plutarch, *Of the tranquillity of the soul.*

[4] See *Romans*, I, 20. The Vulgate text reads: *Invisibilia enim ipsius a creatura mundi, per ea quæ facta sunt, intellecta conspiciuntur; sempiterna quoque ejus virtus, et divinitas.*

[5] And, in truth, God himself does not refuse to the earth the face of the heavens; in its continual revolution he reveals his countenance and

[1] Now, our human reasonings and arguments are as lumpish and sterile matter; the grace of God is their fashioning; it is that which gives them shape and value. In like manner, the virtuous actions of Socrates and of Cato remain vain and profitless from not having had for their end, and not having regarded, love and obedience to the true Creator of all things, and from not having known God; so is it with our thoughts and our arguments: they have some body, but it is a formless mass, without shape and without light, if faith in God and his grace be not added to it. Faith, tingeing and illuminating the arguments of Sebond, makes them firm and solid; they are capable of serving to point out the way, and of being the first guide to a learner, to put him in the path of this knowledge; they in some sort fashion him and make him capable of the grace of God, by means whereof our belief is afterwards completed and perfected. I know a man of authority, bred up in letters, who confessed to me that he was led back from the errors of misbelief by means of Sebond's arguments. And if we strip them of this adornment,[2] and of the assistance and approbation of faith, and, accepting them as purely human thoughts, use them to contend with those who have fallen headlong into the dreadful and horrible darkness of irreligion, they will then still be found as solid and as firm as any others of the same nature that can be brought against them; so that we shall be in a position to say to our opponents, —

Si melius quid habes, accerse, vel imperium fer; [3]

let them submit to the strength of our proofs, or let them shew us elsewhere, and on another subject, any that are more closely interwoven and more full.

form; and he penetrates us with himself and shews himself to us, so that he may be well known, and that, learning by sight what he is, we may learn to observe his laws. — Manilius, *Astronomica*, IV, 907.

[1] In 1580 to 1588, the following sentence came immediately after the lines from Manilius: *Si mon imprimeur estoit si amoureux de ces prefaces questées et empruntées, dequoy par l'humeur de ce siècle il n'est pas livre de bonne maison, s'il n'en a le front garny, il se devoit servir de tels vers que ceux-cy, qui sont de meilleure et plus ancienne race que ceux qu'il y est allé planter.*

[2] That is, of faith.

[3] If you have any thing better, produce it; if not, submit. — Horace, *Epistles*, I, 5.6.

I have, unawares, already half entered into the second objection to which I proposed to make answer on behalf of Sebond. Some say that his arguments are weak, and unsuited to establish what he would; and they undertake to overthrow them easily. We must handle these adversaries a little more roughly, for they are more dangerous and more mischievous than the first. (*c*) We readily arrange the writings of others [1] in favour of the opinions which we have ourselves adopted; an atheist flatters himself upon leading all authors toward atheism; he infects harmless matters with his own venom. (*a*) These have some preoccupation of judgement that dulls their taste for Sebond's arguments. Besides, it seems to them that they are given a fine chance to be at liberty to combat our religion with purely human weapons, whereas they would not dare to attack it in its full majesty, authority, and command. The means that I take to diminish this lunacy, and that seems to me the most fitting, is to crush and trample under foot pride and human arrogance; to make them feel the inanity, the vanity, and worthlessness of man; to tear from their hands the paltry weapons of their reason; to make them bow their heads and bite the dust under the authority and reverence of the divine majesty. To that power alone do knowledge and wisdom pertain; that alone can in itself judge of any thing; and from it we take what account we make of ourselves and what value we put upon ourselves. Οὐ γὰρ ἐᾷ φρονέιν ὁ θεός μέγα ἄλλον ἢ ἑαυτόν.[2]

(*c*) Let us cast down this presumption, the chief foundation of the tyranny of the malign spirit:[3] *Deus superbis resistit; humilibus autem dat gratiam.*[4] Intelligence exists in all the gods, says Plato, and in very few men.[5]

(*a*) Now there is, indeed, much consolation for the Chris-

[1] *On couche volontiers les sens des escris d'autrui.*

[2] For God allows no one but himself to have high thoughts. — Herodotus, VII, 10. Montaigne took it from Stobæus's *Anthology* (Sermon 22). It was one of the sentences inscribed on the walls of his library.

[3] That is, the Evil One.

[4] God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. — I *Peter*, V, 5.

[5] See Plato, *Timæus*.

tian man in seeing our mortal and feeble instruments so fitly suited to our sacred and holy faith, that we employ them in matters of a mortal and feeble nature; they are not more accordantly or more forcibly appropriate to them. Let us see, then, if man has at his command other reasons stronger than those of Sebond, and if it is in him to arrive at any certainty by argument and by reasoning. (*c*) For St. Augustine, contending against people of this sort, has occasion to upbraid them with inconsistency in that they hold those parts of our belief to be false which our reason fails to establish; and, to show that there may be, and have been, many things of which our reason is unable to assign the nature and the causes, he puts before them certain well-known and indubitable facts,[1] as to which man confesses that he has no insight; and this he does, as every thing else, with careful and keen research.[2] More must be done, and they must be taught that, to make evident the weakness of their reason, there is no need of selecting rare instances, and that it is so defective and so blind that there is no facility [3] so clear that it is clear enough for it; that ease and difficulty are as one to it; that all subjects equally, and nature in general, disallow its jurisdiction and intervention.

(*a*) What does the truth enjoin on us, when she enjoins us to fly from worldly philosophy? [4] When she so often inculcates in us that our wisdom is but folly before God; [5] that of all vanities the most vain is man; that a man who presumes on his knowledge knows not yet what it is to know; [6] and that a man who is nothing, if he believes himself to be something, deludes and deceives himself? [7] These sayings of the Holy Spirit express so clearly and so vividly what I desire

[1] *Experiences.*

[2] See St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, XXI, 5.

[3] *Nulle facilité* = no way of comprehension?

[4] See *Colossians*, II, 8: *Videte ne quis vos decipiet per philosophiam vinanem et fallaciam, secundum traditionem hominum, secundum elementos mundi, non secundum Christum.*

[5] See I *Corinthians*, III, 19: *Sapientia enim hujus mundi stultitia est apud Deum.*

[6] See *Ibid.*, VIII, 2: *Si quis autem se existimat scire aliquid, nondum cognovit quemadmodum oporteat cum scire.*

[7] See *Galatians*, VI, 3: *Nam si quis existimat se aliquid esse, cum nihil sit, ipse se seducit.*

to maintain, that I should need no other confirmation for those persons who would yield with all submission and obedience to its authority. But these others [1] choose to be scourged to their own cost, and will not suffer their reason to be opposed except by reason itself.

Let us, then, consider now man by himself, without external aid, armed only with his own weapons, and deprived of divine favour and recognition, in which consists all his honour, his strength, and the foundation of his existence. Let us see how much support he has in that fine equipment. Let him make me understand by the force of his reasoning upon what foundations he has set up the great advantages that he believes himself to have over other people. What has made him believe that the wonderful motions of the celestial vault, the eternal light of those luminaries revolving so proudly above his head, and the terrifying motions of the infinite sea were established and continued for many ages for his pleasure and for his service? Is it possible to imagine any thing so ridiculous as this wretched, paltry creature, who, being not even his own master, exposed to the offences of all things, declares himself master and ruler of the universe [2] of which it is not in his power to understand the smallest fragment, far less to govern it? And this prerogative that he attributes to himself, of being the only creature in this great structure who has the ability to recognise its beauty and its parts, the only one who can render thanks to the architect, and keep account of the income and outlay of the world — who has set the seal of this prerogative upon him? Let him show us the letters patent of this noble and great dignity. (*c*) Were they granted only in favour of the wise? Few people are touched by them. Are fools and wicked men deserving of such extraordinary favour, and, being the worst part of the world, to be preferred before all the rest? [3] Shall we believe him who says: *Quorum igitur*

[1] That is, those who believe in *la philosophie mondaine.*

[2] *Cette miserable et chetive creature qui n'est pas seulement maistresse de soy, exposée aux offences de toutes choses, se die maistresse et Emperiere de l'univers.* It is to be regretted that it is impossible to express the bitterly ironic effect of this description of man as of the feminine gender, made possible in French by the fact that *creature* is feminine.

[3] Cf. Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, I, 9.

causa quis dixerit effectum esse mundum? Eorum scilicet animantium quæ ratione utuntur. Hi sunt dii et homines, quibus profecto nihil est melius. [1] We can never sufficiently chastise the impudence of this coupling.

(*a*) But, poor wretch, what has he in himself worthy of such a privilege? When we consider the incorruptible life of the heavenly bodies, their beauty, their grandeur, their continual motion by so exact a rule;

> cum suspicimus magni cœlestia mundi
> Templa super stellisque micantibus Æthera fixum,
> Et venit in mentem lunæ solisque viarum; [2]

when we consider the domination and power that those bodies have, not only over our lives and the conditions of our fortunes, —

> Facta etenim et vitas hominum suspendit ab astris, [3] —

but even over our inclinations, our judgements, our wills, which they govern, impel, and stir, at the mercy of their influences, as our reason teaches us and discovers, —

> speculataque longe
> Deprendit tacitis dominantia legibus astra,
> Et totum alterna mundum ratione moveri,
> Fatorumque vices certis discernere signis; [4]

when we see that not only a man, not only a king, but monarchies, empires, and all this lower world move with the changes [5] of the slightest celestial motion;

[1] For whose sake, then, shall we say that the world was created? Surely for living beings, who have use of reason. These are gods and men, to whom assuredly nothing is superior. — Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, II, 54.

[2] When we contemplate the celestial vault of the boundless universe over our heads, and the brilliant stars clustered there, and when we meditate upon the revolutions of the moon and the sun. — Lucretius, V, 1204.

[3] For the actions and the lives of men depend on the stars. — Manilius, *Astronomica*, III, 58. Montaigne substituted *facta* for *fata*.

[4] And perceives that the stars, beheld from afar, govern us by their silent commanding laws, and the whole universe to be moved by changing relations, and successive destinies run through fixed signs. — *Ibid.*, I, 60.

[5] *Au branle.*

Quantaque quam parvi faciant discrimina motus;
Tantum est hoc regnum, quod regibus imperat ipsis! [1]

that our virtue, our vices, our ability and learning, and this very conception that we form of the power of the stars, and this comparison between them and ourselves — that all this comes, as our reason conceives, through their means and their favour: —

furit alter amore,
Et pontum tranare potest et vertere Trojam;
Alterius sors est scribendis legibus apta;
Ecce patrem nati perimunt, natosque parentes,
Mutuaque armati coeunt in vulnera fratres;
Non nostrum hoc bellum est; coguntur tanta movere,
Inque suas ferri pœnas lacerandaque membra;
Hoc quoque fatale est, sic ipsum expendere fatum; [2]

if we hold from the disposition of heaven [3] such share of reason as we have, how can reason make us equal to that? how make subject to our knowledge its essence and its nature? All that we see in those bodies astounds us. (*c*) *Quæ molitio, quæ ferramenta, qui vectes, quæ machinæ, qui ministri tanti operis fuerunt?* [4] (*a*) Why do we deprive them of soul and of life and of reason? Have we perceived in them some settled and senseless stupidity, we who have no commerce with them except that of obedience? (*c*) Shall we say that we have found in no other creature than man the use of a reasoning mind? What of that? Have we seen any thing resembling the sun? Is it not existent because we have seen nothing resembling it? and are its movements non-existent

[1] And what great changes are made by small movements . . . so great is this power that rules even kings. — Manilius, *Astronomica*, I, 55 and IV, 93.

[2] This one is mad with love and can swim across a sea and overthrow Troy; the fate of another is to make laws; see sons assassinate their fathers and fathers their sons, and armed brothers attack with mutual blows. Not due to us is this strife; such commotions and bloody chastisements, with lacerated limbs, are compelled by fate. This too is decreed, thus to weigh fate. — *Ibid.*, IV, 79–85, 118.

[3] *Distribution du ciel;* that is, from the disposition of the heavenly bodies in a certain order.

[4] What apparatus, what instruments, what levers, what machines, what labourers achieved so great a work? — Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, I, 8.

because there is nothing like them? If what we have not seen does not exist, our knowledge is wonderfully curtailed. *Quæ sunt tantæ animi angustiæ!* [1] (*a*) Are not these fancies of human vanity, to make of the moon a celestial earth,[2] (*c*) to dream, like Anaxagoras, of mountains and valleys there? [3] (*a*) to place human abodes and habitations there, and to plant colonies there for our convenience, as Plato does, and Plutarch? and to make of the earth a light-giving, luminous star? (*c*) *Inter cætera mortalitatis incommoda te hoc est, calligo mentium, nec tantum necessitas errandi sed errorum amor.*[4] *Corruptibile corpus aggravat animam, et deprimit terrena inhabitatio sensum multa cogitantem.*[5]

(*a*) Presumption is our natural and original malady. The most unfortunate and frail of all creatures is man, and at the same time the most vain-glorious.[6] This creature feels and sees that it is lodged here amid the mire and filth of the world, fast bound and riveted to the worst, the most lifeless and debased part of the universe, on the lowest story of the lodging and the farthest removed from the celestial vault, with these other living beings of the worst condition of the three; [7] and it establishes itself in imagination above the circle of the moon, and brings heaven under its feet. It is through the vanity of this same imagination that he equals himself to God, that he attributes to himself divine conditions, that he selects and separates himself from the crowd of other creatures, shapes the shares of the animals, his fellow members and companions, and distributes among them such portion of faculties and force as seems good to him. How does he know, by the strength of his understanding, the internal and secret stirrings of the animals? By what

[1] How limited are our minds! — *Cicero, De Nat. Deor.*, I, 31.

[2] See Plutarch, *Of the face in the moon.*

[3] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Anaxagoras.*

[4] Among other mortal infirmities is this: a blindness of the mind; and there is in us not merely a necessity of error, but a love of error. — Seneca, *De Ira*, II, 9.

[5] The corruptible body presseth down the soul, and the earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind that museth upon many things. — *Book of Wisdom*, IX, 15, quoted by St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, XII, 15.

[6] See Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*; the Latin sentence is quoted at the end of chap. 14 (vol. 3).

[7] Those that crawl, distinguished from those that fly and swim.

comparison between them and ourselves does he determine the dulness which he attributes to them? (*c*) When I play with my cat, who can say that it is not she amusing herself with me more than I with her?[1] Plato, in his picture of the golden age under Saturn, counts among the chief advantages of that time the communication that he[2] held with the beasts, from whom enquiring and receiving instruction, he learned the true qualities of each and the differences between them, whereby he gained a most perfect intelligence and wariness, and by means of this conducted his life far more fortunately than we could do.[3] Do we need any better proof to judge of human impudence with respect to the beasts? This great author was of opinion that, as regards the greater part of the bodily form which Nature has given them, she considered only the custom of such prognostications as in his day were drawn from them.[4]

(*a*) This deficiency that prevents communication between them and us, why is it not in us as much as in them? It is a matter of conjecture whose fault it is that we do not understand one another; for we do not understand them any more than they us. By this same reasoning they may think us dullards as we think them. It is no great wonder if we do not understand them; neither do we understand the Basques and the Troglodytes. Nevertheless, some men have boasted of understanding them,[5] as Apollonius Thyaneus, (*b*) Melampus, Tiresias, Thales, and others.[6] And since it is the fact, as the cosmographers say, that there are nations which accept a dog for their king, it must be that they give a definite interpretation to his voice and his motions.[7] (*a*) We must take note of the parity that there is between us. We have some half understanding of their meaning; so have the

[1] The edition of 1595 adds: *Nous nous entretenons de singeries reciproques; si j'ay mon heure de commencer ou de refuser, aussi a elle la sienne.*

[2] That is, man.

[3] See Plato, *Statesman.*

[4] See Idem, *Timæus.*

[5] That is, the beasts.

[6] This sentence first appeared in the edition of 1582, but only Apollonius "and others" were included. The other three names were added in 1588.

[7] See Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, VI, 35; Plutarch, *Common conceptions of the Stoics.*

beasts of ours, about to the same degree. They caress us, threaten us, and entreat us; and we them.

Touching another point, we very plainly perceive that there is full and complete communication between them, and that they understand one another — not only those of the same species, but also those of different species.

(*b*) Et mutæ pecudes et denique secla ferarum
Dissimiles fuerunt voces variasque cluere,
Cum metus aut dolor est, aut cum jam gaudia gliscunt.[1]

(*a*) By a certain barking of the dog, the horse knows that he is angry; by a certain other tone of his, he is not startled. Even with the beasts that have no voices, from the interchange of services that we observe among them we readily infer some other means of communication; (*c*) their motions converse and consult.

(*b*) Non alia longe ratione atque ipsa videtur
Protrahere ad gestum pueros infantia linguæ.[2]

(*a*) Why not, even as our mutes, dispute and argue and tell stories by signs? I have seen some of them so agile and so well fashioned for this, that in truth they fell in no wise short of perfection in ability to make themselves understood; lovers show anger, are reconciled, entreat, give thanks, make appointments, and, in short, say every thing with their eyes;

E'l silentio ancor suole
Haver prieghi e parole.[3]

(*c*) What with the hands? We request, we promise, summon, dismiss, threaten, beg, entreat, deny, refuse, question, wonder, count, confess; we show repentance, fear, shame, doubt; we inform, demand, incite, encourage, swear, testify, accuse, condemn, absolve, insult, contemn, defy, affront, flatter, applaud, bless, humiliate, deride, conciliate, commend, extol, congratulate, rejoice, complain; we express

[1] And the dumb domestic animals, and the species of wild beasts are wont to utter distinct and varied cries, according as they feel fear or pain, or when joy arises. — Lucretius, V, 1059.

[2] For no very different reason, the inability to speak is seen to drive children to gesture. — Idem, 1030.

[3] Even silence is wont to have prayers and words. — Tasso, *Aminta*, II, 34. The lines were added in 1582.

sadness, discouragement, despair, astonishment; we explain, keep silent — and what not? — with a variety and multiplicity that rivals the tongue. With the head: we invite, send away, avow, disavow, contradict, welcome, honour, venerate, disdain, question, reject, make merry, lament, caress, taunt, submit, brag, exhort, threaten, affirm, enquire. What with the eyebrows? What with the shoulders? There is no motion that does not speak, and in a language that is intelligible without instruction, and in one that is common to all; whence it follows that, seeing the variety and distinctive use of other languages, this one should rather be judged the one best adapted to the nature of man.[1] I pass over what special necessity teaches, in the way of language, on the instant, to those who have need of it; and the alphabets of the fingers, and the grammars expressed by gestures, and the matters of learning which are practised and expressed only by them; and the nations which Pliny says have no other language.[2]

(*b*) An ambassador from the city of Abdera, after having addressed at great length King Agis of Sparta, said to him: "And now, Sire, what reply do you wish me to take back to our citizens?" "That I let you say whatever you chose and as much as you chose without ever saying a word."[3] Is not that a speaking silence, and very intelligible?

(*a*) As for other matters, what sort of ability of our own do we not recognise in the operations[4] of animals? Is there a government managed with more order, with a greater diversity of labours and functions, and more persistently maintained, than that of the honey-bees? This arrangement of actions and occupations — can we imagine it to be carried on without reasoning and without foresight?

> His quidam signis atque hæc exempla sequuti,
> Esse apibus partem divinæ mentis et haustus
> Æthereos dixere.[5]

[1] See Quintilian, book XI.

[2] See Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, VI, 35. This sentence is very obscure.

[3] See Plutarch, *Apothegms of the Lacedæmonians*.

[4] That is, in the power of producing effects.

[5] These acts and indications being observed, some declare that bees share divine intelligence and supernal emanations. — Virgil, *Georgics*, IV, 219.

The swallows that we see, at the return of spring, prying into all the corners of our houses — do they search without judgement, and could they choose, without discretion, from a thousand places the one which is most convenient for their abode? And can the birds, in the beautiful and wonderful construction of their buildings, make use of a round shape rather than a square one,[1] of an obtuse angle rather than a right angle, without being aware of the condition and the consequences? Do they use, now water, now clay, without considering that the hardness [2] is softened by moistening it? Do they floor their palaces with moss or with down, without foreseeing that the tender members of their little ones will thus lie more softly and more at ease? Do they shelter themselves from the rain-bringing wind and set their abode toward the east, without knowing the different qualities of the wind and deeming that one is more salutary for them than another? Why does the spider make her web thicker in one place and looser in another? why does she use now this kind of knot, now that, if she can not deliberate and reflect and decide? [3] We recognise clearly enough, in most of their works, how far the animals excel us and how feebly our art imitates them. We are conscious at the same time, in our own clumsier works, of the faculties that we employ in them, and that our minds make use in them of all their powers; why do we not think that they [4] do as much? Why do we attribute to I know not what innate and mechanical [5] inclination the works which surpass all that we can produce by nature and by art? Wherein we unthinkingly give them a very great advantage over us, in believing that Nature, from maternal kindness, accompanies them and guides them, as by the hand, in all the actions and utilities of their life; and that she abandons us to hazard and to fortune and to seeking, by skill, the things necessary for our preserva-

[1] *Plustost d'une figure quarrée que de la ronde.* — Here Montaigne so clearly says the opposite of what he means, that the terms are transposed in the translation.

[2] Of the clay.

[3] For this whole passage, from the verses from the *Georgics*, see Plutarch, *What animals are the most cunning.*

[4] That is, other creatures.

[5] *Servile.*

tion, and therewith denies us the power to attain by any education and effort of the mind the natural ability of the beasts; so that their brutish stupidity surpasses, in respect to all utilities, the utmost that our divine intelligence can effect.

Truly, by this reckoning, we should be quite right in calling her a very unjust step-mother. But it is nothing of the sort; our government,[1] is not so misshapen and irregular. Nature has embraced universally all her creatures, and there is not one that she has not very fully supplied with all the means necessary for the preservation of his being; [2] for those foolish complaints that I have heard men make [3] (as the freedom of their opinions sometimes lifts them above the clouds, then casts them down to the antipodes), that we are the only animal left naked on the naked earth, bound, fettered, having only the spoil of others with which to arm and clothe itself, whereas nature has covered all other created things with shells, with husks, with bark, with hair, with wool, with quills, with leather, with down, with feathers, with scales, with fleeces, and with silk, according to the needs of their existence; has armed them with claws, with teeth, with horns, for attack and defence; and has herself even taught them what is proper to them — to swim, to run, to fly, to sting; whereas man knows neither how to walk, nor speak, nor eat, nor do any thing but weep, without instruction;

(*b*) Tum porro puer, ut sævis projectus ab undis
Navita, nudus humi jacet, infans, indigus omni
Vitali auxilio, tum primum in luminis oras
Nixibus ex alvo matris natura profudit;
Vagituque locum lugubri complet, ut æquum est
Cui tantum in vita restet transire malorum.
At variæ crescunt pecudes, armenta, feræque,
Nec crepitacula eis opus est, nec cuiquam adhibenda est
Almæ nutricis blanda atque infracta loquela;
Nec varias quærunt vestes pro tempore cœli;

[1] That is, the government of the world.
[2] See Seneca, *Epistle* 90.
[3] An allusion to Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, beginning of book VII.

Denique non armis opus est, non mœnibus altis,
Queis sua tutentur, quando omnibus omnia large
Tellus ipsa parit naturaque dædala rerum; [1]

(*a*) these complaints are unfounded; there is in the administration of the world a greater equality and a more uniform condition.[2] Our skin is provided as sufficiently as theirs with toughness to resist the attacks of weather; witness so many nations that have never yet known the use of clothes. (*b*) Our ancient Gauls were scarcely clothed; nor are our neighbours, the Irish, beneath so cold a sky. (*a*) But we can better judge of this by ourselves; for all those parts of the person which it pleases us to expose to the wind and weather [3] are found able to endure it: the face, the feet, the hands, the legs, the shoulders, the head, according as custom invites us. For if there were any feeble organ in us and one which, it seems, would be likely to dread coldness, it should be the stomach, where digestion takes place; our fathers went with it uncovered; and our ladies, tender and delicate as they are, have it sometimes half bare to the navel. The bands and swaddling-clothes of children are not necessary, either; and the Lacedæmonian mothers brought up their children with entire freedom of movement of their limbs, without binding or swathing them.[4] Our weeping is common to most of the other animals; and there are scarcely any of them which are not known to whine and moan a long time after their birth, inasmuch as it is a behaviour well

[1] Then the babe, like a sailor hurled out of the cruel billows, lies naked on the ground, speechless, lacking every further need of life, as soon as nature has brought him forth, by birth-throes, from his mother's womb into the region of light; and he fills the place with lugubrious wails; as well he may, since he must traverse in life so many sufferings of different kinds. But the flocks and the herds and the wild beasts grow up, nor need rattles, or the caressing and soothing accents of the fostering nurse; nor do they seek different garments according to the season; they need not arms or high walls to guard their belongings; for the earth itself and nature give forth abundantly all things for all. — Lucretius, V, 222.

[2] In 1580 to 1588: *la foiblesse de nostre naissance se trouve à peu pres, en la naissance des autres creatures.* — See Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, VII, 1.

[3] *Au vent et à l'air.*

[4] See Plutarch, *Life of Lycurgus.*

suited to the weakness that they feel. As for the usage of eating, in us as in them it is natural and untaught;

(*b*) Sentit enim vim quisque suam quam possit abuti.[1]

(*a*) Who questions that a child, when he has attained the power of feeding himself, knows how to seek food? And the earth produces it without any husbandry and skill, and offers him enough for his necessities; and if not at all seasons, neither does she to the beasts: witness the provision that we see made by the ant and others for the sterile time of the year. Those nations that we recently discovered so abundantly provided, without labour, with natural food and drink, not needing to be prepared,[2] have taught us that bread is not our only sustenance, and that our mother Nature formerly supplied us plenteously with all that we needed, without tilling the ground; nay, as is probable, more amply and more richly than she does now, since we have blended therein our skill; —

> Et tellus nitidas fruges vinetaque læta
> Sponte sua primum mortalibus ipsa creavit;
> Ipsa dedit dulces fœtus et pabula læta;
> Quæ nunc vix nostro grandescunt aucta labore,
> Conterimusque boves et vires agricolarum,[3] —

the excess and unruliness of our appetite always outstripping all the devices that we seek for, to satisfy it.

As for arms, we have more natural ones than most other animals and more various motions of the limbs, and we have more service from them, by nature, and without teaching. Those men who are trained to fight naked — we see them rush into dangers similar to those that we encounter. If some beasts excel us in this respect, we excel many others. And skill in fortifying and protecting the body by borrowed means we have by a natural instinct and admonition. As

[1] For every one feels how far he can make use of his peculiar powers. — Lucretius, V, 1033.

[2] *Sans soing et sans façon.*

[3] And the earth itself at first produced for mortals luxuriant crops and fruitful vineyards; of itself gave forth sweet fruits and fertile pastures; which things now increase with difficulty, fostered by our toil; and we exhaust our oxen and the strength of our husbandmen. — Lucretius, II, 1157.

proving that this is so,[1] the elephant sharpens and whets the tusks of which he avails himself in war (for he has some special ones for that purpose, which he spares and does not use at all for other services). When bulls begin to fight, they raise and scatter dust about them; the boars grind their tusks, and the ichneumon, when he is to come to grips with the crocodile, strengthens his body, besmears it, and encrusts it all over with mud very compactly pressed and well kneaded, as with a cuirass.[2] Why shall we not say that it is also natural for us to arm ourselves with wood and iron?

As for speech, it is certain that, if it be not natural, it is not necessary. Therefore, I believe that a child who had been brought up in absolute solitude, apart from all intercourse (which would be an experiment difficult to make), would have some kind of speech to express his thoughts; and it is not to be believed that Nature has denied us this gift which she has bestowed on many other animals; for what else than speech is the faculty which we see in them of complaining, of rejoicing, of calling upon one another for help, of inviting one another to love, as they do by the use of their voices? (*b*) How can they not speak among themselves? They truly speak to us, and we to them. In how many ways do we speak to our dogs? And they answer us. We talk with them with other language, with other modes of calling, than with birds, with hogs, with oxen, with horses, and we change our form of speech according to the kind.[3]

(*a*) Cosi per entro loro schiera bruna
S'ammusa l'una con l'altra formica
Forse à spiar lor via, et lor fortuna.[4]

It seems to me that Lactantius attributes to beasts, not speech alone, but laughter as well.[5] And the difference in language which is seen amongst us, according to the difference in country, is found also with animals of the same

[1] That is, that this is a natural instinct in us.

[2] See Plutarch, *Which animals are the most cunning.*

[3] *Et nous changeons d'idiome selon l'espece.*

[4] So in their brown troop, one ant touches muzzle with another, perchance to spy out their way and their fortune. — Dante, *Purgatory*, XXVI, 34.

[5] See Lactantius, *Divine Institutions*, III, 10.

species. Aristotle cites in this connection the different songs of partridge, according to the situation of their dwelling-place.[1]

(*b*) Variæque volucres
Longe alias alio jaciunt in tempore voces,
Et partim mutant cum tempestatibus una
Raucisonos cantus.[2]

(*a*) But it is still to be known what language that child would speak; and what is said of it by conjecture has not much probability. If it is urged against this opinion,[3] that those who are born deaf do not speak, I answer that it is not solely because they are unable to receive instruction in speech through the ear, but rather because the sense of hearing, of which they are deprived, is related to that of speech, and they are connected by a natural union; in such a way that, whatever we may utter, we must needs utter it first to ourselves, and make it heard within, to our own ears, before sending it forth to the ears of others.

I have said all this to establish the resemblance that there is in human things, and to bring us back and add us to the general crowd. We are neither above nor below the others; all that is beneath the sky, says the wise man, incurs a like law and fortune:[4]

(*b*) Indupedita suis fatalibus omnia vinclis.[5]

(*a*) There is some difference. There are ranks and degrees; but it is within the form of one same nature:

(*b*) res quæque suo ritu procedit, et omnes
Fœdere naturæ certo discrimina servant.[6]

(*a*) Man must be restrained and marshalled within the barriers of this control. Wretched being, he has indeed no

[1] See Aristotle, *History of Animals*, IV, 9.9.

[2] Divers birds utter at different times noises widely different; and some of them change their hoarse songs with the seasons. — Lucretius, V, 1078, 1081, 1083, 1084.

[3] That is, that the child would talk in some way.

[4] See Book I, chap. 36 (Vol. I, p. 298 and note 1).

[5] All are hampered by their fatal shackles. — Lucretius, V, 876.

[6] Every thing proceeds by its own law, and all preserve their distinctive differences by a fixed pact of nature. — Lucretius, V, 923.

power to overleap them; he is shackled and held fast; he is subject to the same obligations as the other creatures of his class, and in a very mediocre position, without any prerogative, any real and essential preëxcellence. That which he attributes to himself in thought and by fancy has neither body nor perceptibleness; [1] and if it be true that he alone of all animals has this freedom of imagination and this license of thought, representing to him what is, what is not, what he desires, the false and the true, it is a privilege which he buys dear, and upon which he has little reason to pride himself; for thence springs the chief source of the evils which crowd upon him: sin, disease, irresolution, disquiet, despair.

I say then, to return to my subject, that there is no ground for thinking that the beasts do by innate and enforced inclination the same things that we do by our choice and skill. We ought to conclude from like manifestations like faculties, and consequently to confess that the same reasoning, the same way that we follow in working, is also that of animals. Why, when we are not conscious of any such condition, do we imagine in them this natural constraint? Add to which that it is more honourable to be put in the way, and compelled, to act in orderly fashion, by natural and inevitable impulse, and more nearly approaching divinity, than to act rightly from hasty and fortuitous liberty; and safer to leave to Nature than to ourselves the reins of our guidance. The vanity of our presumption causes us to like better to owe our capacity to our powers rather than to her liberality; and we enrich the other animals with natural possessions, and give those over to them, that we may honour and ennoble ourselves with acquired possessions — very foolishly, it seems to me, for I should prize quite as highly favours wholly mine and inborn, as those which I had begged and sought from education.

It is not in our power to acquire a more noble advantage [2] than to be favoured by God and by nature. Consequently, the fox, of whom the people of Thrace make use when they desire to undertake to cross on the ice a frozen river, and send him before them to that end — if we should see him,

[1] *Goust.* [2] *Une plus belle recommendation.*

on the brink of the stream, put his ear very close to the ice, to perceive whether he hears at a long or a short distance the rustle of the water flowing beneath, draw back, or go forward, according as he thus learns the greater or less thickness of the ice, should we not be justified in thinking that there passes through his head the same reasoning that there would be in ours, and that it is a ratiocination and conclusion derived from natural sense: that which makes a noise is moving; that which moves is not frozen; that which is not frozen is liquid; and that which is liquid yields under a weight?[1] For to attribute this simply to a keenness of the sense of hearing, without reasoning and without consequence, is a wild fancy and can not enter our minds. In like manner should be judged the many sorts of wiles and devices with which the beasts protect themselves from our attacks upon them. And if we are inclined to make some advantage of the fact that it is in our power to capture them, to employ them for our service and use them at our pleasure, this is only the same advantage that we have over one another. We have our slaves in this state. (*b*) And the Climacides — were they not women in Syria who, stooping on all fours, served as foot-stools and ladders for the ladies to mount into their coaches?[2] (*a*) And the greater number of free persons surrender their life and their existence, for very slight benefits, to the power of others. (*c*) The wives and concubines of the Thracians contend as to which shall be chosen to be killed on the tomb of her husband.[3] (*a*) Have tyrants ever failed to find enough men sworn to their service, some of them in addition enforcing the obligation to accompany them to death as in life? (*b*) Whole armies have thus been bound to their leaders.[4] The form of the oath in the untrained company of fighters to extremity[5] contained these promises: "We swear to allow ourselves to be fettered, burned, beaten, and killed with the sword, and to suffer all that regular gladiators suffer from their master,

[1] See Plutarch, *What animals are the most cunning.*
[2] See Plutarch, *How to tell a flatterer from a friend.*
[3] See Herodotus, V, 5.
[4] See Cæsar, *De Bello Gallico*, III, 22.
[5] *En cette rude escole des escrimeurs à outrance.*

pledging most religiously both body and soul to his service": [1] —

Ure meum, si vis, flamma caput, et pete ferro
Corpus, et intorto verbere terga seca.[2]

This was a pledge, indeed; and yet, in a certain year there were ten thousand men who entered into it and lost their lives in such wise. (*c*) When the Scythians buried their king, they strangled upon his body his favourite concubine, his cup-bearer, his equerry, his chamberlain, his usher, and his cook. And on his anniversary they killed fifty horses and mounted on them fifty pages whom they had impaled along the spine to the neck, and left them, thus set in order, around the tomb.[3]

(*a*) The men who serve us do it more cheaply and for less careful and less kind treatment than that which we give to birds and horses and dogs. (*c*) What trouble do we not put ourselves to, for their benefit? It does not seem to me that the meanest servants readily do for their masters what princes think it an honour to do for these beasts. Diogenes seeing his kinsmen endeavouring to redeem him from servitude, "They are fools," he said; "he who looks after me and feeds me is my servant"; [4] and they who maintain beasts ought rather to be said to serve them than to be served by them.

(*a*) And also the beasts have this nobler quality, that no lion ever subjected himself to another lion, nor a horse to another horse, from lack of spirit.[5] As we hunt beasts, so do lions and tigers hunt men; and they have a similar mode of action against one another: dogs against hares, pike against tench, swallows against locusts, sparrow-hawks against blackbirds and larks.

(*b*) Serpente ciconia pullos
Nutrit, et inventa per devia rura lacerta,

[1] See Justus Lipsius, *Saturnalium sermonum*, II, 5.

[2] Burn my head with flame, if you will, and wound my body with a sword, and scourge my back with a rope. — Tibullus, I, 9.21.

[3] See Herodotus, IV, 71, 72. The pages were strangled first.

[4] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Diogenes*.

[5] See Plutarch, *That wild beasts make use of reason.*

Et leporem aut capream famulæ Jovis, et generosæ
In saltu venantur aves.[1]

We share the fruit of our hunting with our dogs and birds, as we do the labour and the skill; and near Amphipolis in Thrace, the hunters and wild falcons share their booty in equal halves;[2] likewise, by the Palus Mæotides,[3] if the fisherman does not leave for the wolves, honestly, half of his catch, they immediately tear his nets.[4] (*a*) And as we have a sort of hunt which is conducted more by cunning than by strength, like that with snares,[5] and fish-hooks, so may be seen similar methods amongst the beasts. Aristotle says that the cuttle-fish ejects from her throat a gut as long as a line,[6] which she casts afar on loosing it, and draws back into herself when she chooses; when she sees some little fish drawing near, she lets him bite the end of this gut, she lying hidden in the sand or the mud, and draws it in bit by bit until the little fish is so near her that with a leap she can catch it.[7]

In the matter of strength, there is no animal in the world exposed to so many injuries as man: there is no need of a whale, an elephant, a crocodile, or any other such animal of which a single one is capable of destroying a great number of men; lice were enough to make vacant the dictatorship of Sylla;[8] the heart and the life of a great and triumphant emperor is the breakfast of a little worm. Why do we say that in man it is learning and knowledge, built up by study and reasoning, that discriminates things useful for his being and for the cure of his maladies from those that are not so; that knows the virtues of rhubarb and polypody? And when we see the goats of Candia, if they have been wounded by an arrow, select, from amongst a million herbs, dittany

[1] The stork feeds her young on serpents and on lizards found in the open fields . . . but the birds of the noble household of Jupiter hunt hares or wild goats in the glade. — Juvenal, XIV, 74, 75, 81, 82.

[2] See Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, X, 8.

[3] The Sea of Azof.

[4] See *Ibid.*

[5] *Colliers* = *collets.*

[6] *Ligne*: fishing-line(?)

[7] See Plutarch, *What animals are the most cunning.*

[8] See Idem, *Life of Sylla.*

to cure them;[1] and the tortoise, when she has eaten a snake, instantly seek wild marjoram to purge herself; the dragon rub and brighten his eyes with fennel; storks give themselves clysters of sea-water; elephants pull out, not only from their own bodies and those of their companions, but from the bodies of their masters also (witness the elephant of King Porus, whom Alexander defeated[2]), the javelins and darts which have been cast at them in the fight, and pull them out so dexterously that we could not do it with as little pain[3] — why should we not say that this is learning and skill? For to allege for their disparagement that it is solely through the teaching and guidance of nature that they know these things is not to take from them their title to learning and skill; it is to attribute it to them with more reason than to ourselves, from the honour of so infallible a school-mistress.

Chrysippus,[4] although in every thing else as scornful a judge of the condition of animals as any other philosopher whatever, considering the movements of the dog who, finding himself at the junction of three roads, being in quest of his master whom he has lost, or in pursuit of some prey that is flying from him, tries one road after another, and after having assured himself about two, and found in them no trace of what he seeks, darts into the third without hesitation — he is forced to confess that in that dog some such reasoning as this takes place: "I have followed my master's trail to these crossroads; he must necessarily have gone on by one of these three roads; he did not go by this one or by that one, therefore he must infallibly have gone by this other"; and that, being assured by this conclusion and reasoning, he no longer uses his scent on the third road, nor searches it, but lets himself be carried on by the force of

[1] For this and the following examples, see Plutarch, *What animals are the most cunning.*

[2] See *Ibid.*; also, *Life of Alexander.*

[3] In 1580: *qu'ils ne font mal ne douleur quelconque* — Plutarch's words as rendered by Amyot; changed in 1588 to *que nous ne le sçaurions faire avec si peu de douleur:* "No longer having the text before him," says M. Villey, "Montaigne makes his statement less emphatic."

[4] A Greek philosopher, about 280 B.C.

reason.[1] This purely logical course and this employment of propositions divided and joined and of the just enumeration of parts [2] — is it not as well that the dog should know it of himself as learn it from Trapezuntius? [3]

Yet the beasts are not incapable of being instructed in our way. We teach blackbirds, crows, magpies, parrots, to talk; and the facilities that we recognise in ourselves, with which we make their voice and breath so flexible and manageable as to shape it and confine it to a certain number of letters and syllables, prove that they have a reasoning faculty within, which makes them thus teachable and willing to learn. I think that every one has seen often enough the many kinds of tricks that those who carry dancing dogs about teach them: the dances, in which they do not miss a single cadence of the tone they hear; many different movements and leaps which they are made to perform at the word of command; but I observe with greater wonder the mental action, which is, however, common enough, of the dogs that blind men make use of in the country and in the towns; I have noticed how they stop at certain doors where they are accustomed to receive alms; how they avoid the encounter of coaches and carts, even when, so far as concerns themselves, they have room enough to pass. I have seen one, going along a town-trench, leave a plain smooth path and take a worse one, to lead his master away from the trench. How had that dog been made to understand that it was his office to regard solely the safety of his master, and to neglect his own ease to serve him? And how did he know that a certain path, quite wide enough for him, would not be so for a blind man? Would all this be possible without ratiocination?

We should not forget what Plutarch says that he saw a dog do at the theatre of Marcellus, in the presence of the Emperor Vespasian the father. This dog was in the service of an exhibiter of dogs, who gave a play of several scenes

[1] See Plutarch, *What animals are the most cunning;* Sextus Empiricus, *Hypotyposes,* I, 14. Montaigne's version of the story does not follow absolutely either text.

[2] The *sufficiens enumeratio partium* was one of the essential qualities of a syllogism according to the old scholastic logic.

[3] Georgius Trapezuntius (George of Trebizond), 1396–1486.

and several characters, and the dog had his part in it. Amongst other things, he had to pretend for a time to be dead from having swallowed a certain drug; after having eaten the bread which passed for the drug, he began soon to tremble and stagger as if he were giddy; finally, stretching himself out and stiffening himself, as if dead, he let himself be pulled and dragged from one place to another, as the plot of the play required; and then, when he knew that it was time, he began first to move, little by little, as if he were coming out of a profound sleep, and, raising his head, gazed here and there in a way that amazed all the spectators.[1] The oxen that were employed in the royal gardens of Susa, to water them and to turn certain great wheels for drawing water, to which buckets were attached (as is often seen in Languedoc), were ordered to make a hundred turns a day; they were so accustomed to that number that it was impossible, by any compulsion, to make them draw one turn more; and, having completed their task, they stopped short. We are at the age of adolescence before we can count up to a hundred, and we have just discovered nations which have no knowledge of numbers.

There is even more reasoning employed in teaching others than in being taught. Now, leaving aside what Democritus thought and proved, — that we have learned from the beasts most of the arts: as from the spider to spin and sew, from the swallow to build, music from the swan and the nightingale, and from many animals, by imitating them, to practise medicine, — Aristotle holds that nightingales teach their young to sing, and spend time and pains about it; whence it happens that those we bring up in cages, which have not been able to go to school to their parents, lose much of the charm of their song. (*b*) We can judge by this that it is improved by teaching and study. And even among those that are free, it is not one and the same; each one has acquired it according to his capacity; and in the eagerness of their learning, they strive with such gallant rivalry to excel each other, that sometimes the one vanquished falls dead, his breath failing him rather than his

[1] See Plutarch, *What animals are the most cunning*, for this and the following examples.

voice. The younger ones thoughtfully ponder and try to imitate certain broken notes. The pupil listens to the instruction of his tutor and very carefully takes account of it; they fall silent, now one, now the other; we hear mistakes corrected and perceive some reproof from the tutor.[1] I once saw (says Arrius) an elephant who had a cymbal hung on each leg and another fastened to his trunk, at the sound of which all the others danced in a circle, rising and stooping at certain cadences, as the instrument guided them; and he had pleasure in listening to that music.[2] (*a*) In the public shows in Rome there were frequently seen elephants trained to move and to dance at the sound of the voice, in dances with many complications and breaks and varying cadences very difficult to learn. Some have been seen, when alone, to rehearse their lesson and practise carefully and studiously, in order not to be scolded and beaten by their masters.[3]

But the story of the magpie, whereof we have even Plutarch for authority, is strange. She was in the shop of a barber in Rome, and did wonders in the way of imitating with her voice whatever she heard. It happened one day that some trumpeters stopped in front of the shop and blew there a long time. Afterward, and all the next day, behold this magpie thoughtful, silent, and melancholy, at which everybody marvelled; and they thought that the noise of the trumpets had thus deafened and benumbed her, and that, at the same time with her hearing, her voice was lost. But at last they found that it was profound study and a withdrawal into herself, her thought exercising itself and preparing her voice to reproduce the notes of those trumpets; so that the first sound she uttered was to express perfectly their beginnings, their pauses, and their shifting scales; having, from this new lesson, quitted and disdained all that she could accomplish before.[4] I must not fail to adduce also this other example, of a dog which this same Plutarch says that he saw when he was on shipboard (for, as to order, I am well aware that I confuse it; but I am no more heedful of

[1] See Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, X, 29.
[2] See Arrianus (not Arrius), *History of India*, XIV.
[3] See Plutarch, *What animals are the most cunning.*
[4] See *Ibid.*

that, in arranging these examples, than in the rest of all my doings); this dog, being desirous to get the oil that was at the bottom of a jug, where he could not reach it with his tongue because of the narrow mouth of the vessel, sought for some stones, and put them in this jug until he had made the oil rise near to the edge, where he could get at it.[1] What was this, if not the act of a very wily intelligence? They say that the ravens of Barbary do the same thing, when the water they wish to drink is too low.

This action is somewhat akin to what a king of their nation,[2] Juba, told about elephants: that when, by the craft of those who hunt them, one of them finds himself trapped in certain deep pits prepared for them, which are covered with slender branches to deceive them, his fellows, with all diligence, bring many stones and pieces of wood to help him to climb out.[3] But this animal in so many other ways approaches human intelligence that, if I chose to follow out in detail what experience has taught of him, I should easily gain belief for what I am wont to maintain,[4] that more difference may be found between one man and another than between such an animal and such a man. The keeper of an elephant in a private house in Syria robbed him at every meal of half the ration which had been ordered for him. One day the master chose to feed him himself, and poured into his manger the full measure of barley which he had prescribed for his sustenance. The elephant, regarding his keeper with an angry eye, separated with his trunk and put aside the half, thus indicating the wrong that had been done him.[5] And another, having a keeper who mixed stones with his food, to increase the measure of it, went to the kettle in which the meat for his [6] dinner was boiling and filled it with ashes. These are individual instances; but every one has seen, and every one knows, that in all the armies which were maintained in Oriental countries, one of the greatest sources of strength consisted of elephants, from whom

[1] See Plutarch, *What animls are the most cunning.*
[2] Barbary.
[3] See *Ibid.*
[4] Cf. Book I, chap. 42 (Vol. I, p. 340).
[5] See Plutarch, *What animals are the most cunning.*
[6] The keeper's. See *Ibid.*

results were obtained incomparably greater than we now obtain with our artillery, which very nearly takes their place in a ranged battle (this is readily discerned by those who are familiar with ancient histories): —

(*b*) siquidem Tyrio servire solebant
Annibali, et nostris ducibus, regique Molosso,
Horum majores, et dorso ferre cohortes,
Partem aliquam belli et euntem in prœlia turmam.[1]

(*a*) They must needs be quite assured of the confidence that those animals deserve and of their intelligence, since they give over to them the vanguard of an army, where the slightest check they might cause, by the great size and weight of their bodies, the slightest fright that might have made them turn round upon their own people, would have been enough to ruin every thing; and fewer instances are known when this has happened, that they fell back upon their troops, than of those when we fall back upon one another and put ourselves to rout. They were entrusted, not with one simple evolution, but with different parts of the battle. (*b*) As the Spaniards, in the recent conquest of the Indies, did with their dogs, whom they paid and to whom they gave a share in the booty; and those animals displayed as much of skill and judgement in pursuing and checking their victory, in charging or falling back according to the circumstances, in distinguishing friends from enemies, as they did of ardour and fierceness.[2]

(*a*) We wonder more at unfamiliar things than at common ones, and give more weight to them; and but for that, I should not have spent my time on this long record; for, in my opinion, he who shall observe closely what we commonly see in the animals that live among us may find in them manifestations as wonderful as those which we gather from other countries and ages.[3] (*c*) It is one and the same

[1] Their ancestors were trained to serve Tyrian Hannibal and our own generals and the Molossian king, and to carry cohorts on their backs, a part of the armament, and towers that entered into the fight. — Juvenal, XII, 107.

[2] See Lopez de Gomara, *Histoire Gênêrale des Indes*.

[3] In 1580 to 1588: *Nous vivons, et eux et nous, sous mesme tect et humons une mesme air: il y a, sauf le plus et le moins, entre nous une perpetuelle ressemblance.*

nature pursuing its course. He who should intelligently apprehend its present condition could safely deduce therefrom both the whole future and the whole past. (*a*) I have seen amongst us, in past days, men who have come from distant countries, and, because we did not at all understand their language, and because, moreover, their mode of life and behaviour and clothing were entirely different from ours, who of us did not regard them as savages and brutes? Who did not attribute to stupidity and dulness that they were speechless, without knowledge of the French language, without knowledge of our hand-kissings and our sinuous bowings,[1] our carriage and our demeanour, from which, without fail, human nature should take pattern? Whatever seems strange to us we condemn, and what we do not understand; as happens with the judgement that we form of the beasts. They have many qualities which resemble ours; of these, by comparison, we can form some conjecture; but as to those that are peculiar to them, how do we know what they are? Horses, dogs, oxen, sheep, birds, and most of the animals that live with us, recognise our voice, and let themselves be guided by it; so, too, did Crassus's lamprey, and came to him when he called him; and so also do the eels that are in the fountain of Arethusa.[2] (*b*) And I have seen many fishponds where the fishes come in shoals, to eat, at a certain call from those who feed them.

(*a*) Nomen habent, et ad magistri
Vocem quisque sui venit citatus.[3]

We can judge by that. We may say also that elephants have some participation in religion, because, after their ablutions and cleansings, we see them lifting their trunks like arms, and, keeping their eyes fixed on the rising sun, stand a long time in meditation and contemplation at certain hours of the day, from their own inclination, without instruction and without precept.[4] But because we see no such

[1] *Inclinations serpentées.*

[2] See Plutarch, *What animals are the most cunning.*

[3] They have names, and each one comes to his master when summoned by his voice. — Martial, IV, 29.6.

[4] *Precepte* = authoritative command. See Plutarch, *What animals are the most cunning;* Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, VIII, 1.

manifestation in other animals, we can not therefore assert that they are without religion, and we can form no opinion about what is hidden from us. As we perceive to some extent in that action which, because it resembles our own, Cleanthes commented on: he says that he saw some ants go from their hill, bearing the body of a dead ant, toward another hill from which several ants came out to meet them, as if to parley with them; and after they had been together some time, the latter went back to consult, you may suppose, with their fellow citizens, and in like manner they made two or three trips because of the difficulty of the capitulation; finally, the last-comers brought to the others a worm from their burrow, as if for the ransom of the dead, which worm the first-comers took upon their backs and carried it home with them, leaving the body of the dead ant with the others.[1] This is the interpretation that Cleanthes gave of this scene, deposing thereby that creatures that have no voice do not fail to have mutual intercourse and communication, in which it is our misfortune that we do not participate; and for that reason, it is foolish for us to express an opinion about it.

Now they achieve still other effects, which greatly surpass our ability, which we are so far from being able to reach by imitation, that even in thought we can not conceive them. Many [2] maintain that in that great and last naval battle which Antonius lost to Augustus, his admiral galley [3] was stopped in mid-course by the little fish which the Latins call *remora*, because of this property it has of arresting every sort of vessel to which it attaches itself. And the Emperor Caligula sailing with a great fleet along the coast of Roumania, his galley alone was stopped short by this same fish, which he caused to be removed from the keel of his vessel, to which it was attached, very much vexed that so small an animal could be stronger than the sea and the winds and the compulsion of all his oars, simply by clinging with its beak to the galley (for it is a shell-fish); and he was also amazed, not without good reason, that, when it was brought aboard the vessel, it had no longer the strength that it had

[1] See Plutarch, *What animals are the most cunning.*

[2] That is, many authors.

[3] *Galere capitanesse.*

outside.[1] A citizen of Cyzicum formerly gained the reputation of being an excellent mathematician[2] from having learned about the property of the hedge-hog, that he has openings in his burrow in diverse places and toward diverse winds, and foreseeing from what quarter the wind will next come, he closes the hole on that side; observing which, the citizen brought to his city infallible predictions of the wind which would blow next.[3] The chameleon takes the colour of the place where he lies; but the polypus gives himself what colour he pleases, according to circumstances, to conceal himself from what he fears and to deceive what he seeks; in the chameleon it is a passive change, in the polypus an active one.[4] We experience some changes of colour from fear, anger, shame, and other passions, which alter the hue of our faces, but it is involuntarily,[5] as in the chameleon; it is in the power of the yellows[6] to make us yellow, but it is not in that of our will. Now, these qualities which we detect in other animals, greater than our own, bear witness to some superior faculty in them, which is hidden from us; as, it is probable, are many others of their properties and powers (*c*) of which no appearances reach us.

(*a*) Of all the predictions of past time the oldest and surest were those which were derived from the flight of birds. We have nothing like it, or so wonderful. That regularity and order in the movement of the wings, from which the consequences of future things were derived, must surely have been guided by some superior influence to so noble an operation; for it is wresting the fact[7] to attribute this great result to some natural command, without there being intelligence, accord, and reasoning in that which produces it; and it is an opinion manifestly false. To prove that it is so: the torpedo-fish has the property, not only of benumbing the limbs that touch her, but through nets and seine[8] she

[1] See Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, XXXII, 1.

[2] That is, astrologer, the Latin *mathematicus*.

[3] See Plutarch, *What animals are the most cunning.*

[4] See *Ibid.*

[5] *Par l'effect de la souffrance.*

[6] *Jaunisse* (jaundice).

[7] *Car c'est prester à la lettre.*

[8] *Au travers des filets et de la scene;* that is, small and large fishing-nets. See *Ibid.*

transmits a benumbed stiffness to the hands of those who poke and stir her. Truly, they say, furthermore, that, if you pour water upon her, you feel this sensation rising up against the stream, even to the hand, and deadening the touch through the water. This power is wonderful, but it is not useless to the torpedo; she is conscious of it and uses it, since, to capture the prey that she seeks, we see her hide herself under the mud in such wise that the other fish swimming above, stricken and paralyzed by her coldness, fall into her power. The cranes, the swallows, and other birds of passage, changing their abode according to the seasons of the year, show plainly the knowledge they have of their faculty of divination, and put it to use. Hunters assure us that, to select from a number of pups the one that should be kept as being the best, we need only put the mother in a position herself to select it; for, if they are taken out of the kennel, the first one that she brings back there will always be the best; or, if we pretend to surround the kennel with fire on all sides, it will be that one of the pups to whose aid she runs first. Whence it appears that they have a power of prognostication which we have not, or else that they have some faculty of judging of their offspring, other and keener than we have.[1]

The condition of beasts in birth, in begetting, feeding, acting, moving, living, and dying being so similar to our own, all diminishment that we make of their inciting agents,[2] all that we add to our condition to make it appear superior to theirs, can in no wise come from the reasoning of our intelligence. As regards the proper ordering of our health, physicians put before us the example of the beasts' manner of living; and this saying has always been in the mouths of the people: —

> Tenez chauts les pieds et la teste;
> Au demeurant, vivez en beste.[3]

[1] In 1580 to 1588: *Car à nos enfans il est certain que bien avant en l'aage, nous n'y découvrons rien sauf la forme corporelle, par où nous en puissions faire triage.*

[2] *Leurs causes motrices.*

[3] Keep your feet and head warm; for the rest, live as the beasts do.

La generation est la principale des actions naturelles; nous avons quelque disposition de membres qui nous est plus propre à cela; toutes fois ils nous ordonnent de nous ranger à l'assiete et disposition brutale, comme plus effectuelle;

> More ferarum
> Quadrupedumque magis ritu, plerumque putantur
> Concipere uxores; quia sic loca sumere possunt,
> Pectoribus positis, sublatis semina lumbis.[1]

Et rejettent comme nuisibles ces mouvements indiscrets et insolents que les femmes y ont meslé de leur crue, les ramenant à l'exemple et usage des bestes de leur sexe, plus modeste et rassis;

> Nam mulier prohibet se concipere atque repugnat,
> Clunibus ipsa viri venerem si læta retractet,
> Atque exossato ciet omni pectore fluctus.
> Ejicit enim sulcum recta regione viaque
> Vomerem, atque locis avertit seminis ictum.[2]

If it be justice to render to every one what is his due, the beasts, who serve, love, and defend their benefactors, and who pursue and handle roughly strangers and those who offend them, represent in so doing some imitations of our justice, as they likewise do in observing a very equitable impartiality in distributing whatever they may have among their little ones. As for friendship, it is with them beyond comparison more lively and more faithful than with men. Hircanus, the dog of King Lysimathus, when his master died, remained obstinately on his bed, refusing to drink or eat; and the day that they burned the body, he suddenly ran and jumped into the flames, in which he was burned.[3] As did also the dog of one Pyrrhus, for he did not budge from lying on his master's bed after he had died; and when they took him [4] away, he let himself be carried along with him, and finally rushed into the fire in which they were burning his master's body. There are certain affectionate tendencies that are sometimes born in us without the coun-

[1] Lucretius, IV, 1264; the sense is given in the text.
[2] Idem, IV, 1269.
[3] See Plutarch, *What animals are the most cunning.*
[4] That is, Pyrrhus. See *Ibid.*

sel of reason, which are due to a haphazard temerity that others call sympathy; beasts, like us, are capable of them; we see horses form a sort of friendship with one another, to the point of putting us to trouble in making them live or travel apart; we see them fasten their affections upon a particular colour among their companions, as upon a particular face, and when they fall in with it, immediately approach it with flattering demeanour and demonstrations of good-will; and toward some other aspect, show loathing and hatred. Animals, like ourselves, have some choice in their loves and make selection among their females. They are not exempt from our jealousies, or from our extreme and irreconcilable desires.

Carnal longings are either natural and necessary, like drinking and eating; or natural and not necessary, like commerce with females; or they are neither natural nor necessary; of the last sort are nearly all those of mankind — they are all superfluous or artificial.[1] For it is wonderful how little Nature needs to satisfy her, how little she leaves for us to desire. The cooking in our kitchen is not of her appointment.[2] The Stoics say that a man could subsist on one olive a day. Our delicacy of taste about wines is not of her teaching, nor the surcharge that we add to our amorous appetites, —

neque illa
Magno prognatum deposcit consule cunnum.[3]

These unnatural longings which ignorance of good and a false opinion have instilled into us are so very numerous that they expel almost all the natural ones; neither more nor less than if, in a large city, there were so great a number of strangers that they forced out all the native-born inhabitants, or suppressed their ancient authority and power, usurping it completely and taking possession of it. The animals are much more controlled than we are, and restrain themselves with more moderation within the limits that Nature has prescribed for us; but not so strictly that they

[1] See Plutarch, *That beasts make use of reason.*

[2] *Les apprests à nos cuisines ne touchent pas son ordonnance.*

[3] She (Nature) never demands a woman descended from a great consul. — Horace, *Satires*, I, 2.69.

have not some consonance with our dissoluteness. Et tout ainsi comme il s'est trouvé des desirs furieux qui ont poussé les hommes à l'amour des bestes, elles se trouvent aussi par fois esprises de nostre amour et reçoivent des affections monstrueuses d'une espece à autre: tesmoin l'elephant corrival d'Aristophanes le grammairien en l'amour d'une jeune bouquetiere en la ville d'Alexandrie, qui ne luy cedoit en rien aux offices d'un poursuyvant bien passionné; car, se promenant, par le marché où l'on vendoit des fruits, il en prenoit avec sa trompe et les luy portoit; il ne la perdoit de veue que le moins qu'il luy estoit possible, et luy mettoit quelquefois la trompe dans le sein par dessoubs son collet et luy tastoit les testins. Ils recitent aussi d'un dragon amoureux d'une fille, et d'une oye esprise de l'amour d'un enfant en la ville d'Asope, et d'un belier serviteur de la menestriere Glaucia; et il se void tous les jours des magots furieusement espris de l'amour des femmes.[1] On void aussi certains animaux s'adonner à l'amour des masles de leur sexe: Oppianus et autres recitent quelques exemples pour montrer la reverence que les bestes en leurs mariages portent à la parenté,[2] mais l'experience nous faict bien souvent voir le contraire:

> nec habetur turpe juvencæ
> Ferre patrem tergo; fit equo sua filia conjux;
> Quasque creavit init pecudes caper; ipsaque cujus
> Semine concepta est, ex illo concipit ales.[3]

Of malicious cunning was there ever a more manifest example than that of a mule of the philosopher Thales, who, with a load of salt, having followed a river and by chance stumbled in it, so that the bags he bore were all wet, having perceived that the salt, being wetted by this, made his burden lighter, never failed, as soon as he came to any stream, to plunge in with his load; until his master, detecting his mischievousness, ordered that he should be laden with wool; whereupon, finding himself out in his reckoning, he ceased to make use of that trick?[4] There are many animals which naturally present the aspect of our avarice; for we observe in

[1] These examples are all taken from Plutarch, *What animals are the most cunning.*

[2] See Oppianus, *De Venatione.*

[3] Ovid, *Metam.*, X, 325.

[4] See Plutarch, *What animals are the most cunning.*

them an extreme eagerness to pounce upon all that they can and to conceal it carefully, although they make no use of it. As for good husbandry, they not only surpass us in the foresight of storing up and saving for the future, but they have, moreover, many parts of the knowledge which is necessary thereto. The ants spread their grain and seed outside, on a smooth place, to air, and freshen and dry them when they see them beginning to get mildewed and to smell musty. But the caution and foresight they use in gnawing the grain of wheat surpasses all thought of human prudence. Because the wheat does not keep always dry and sound, but softens, moistens, and dissolves as if in milk, proceeding toward germination and reproduction; for fear lest it become seed, and lose its nature and property as a storehouse for their subsistence, they bite off the end at which it is wont to sprout.[1]

As for war, which is the mightiest and most magnificent of human actions, I should like to know if we choose to make use of it as an argument in favour of any prerogative, or, on the contrary, as testifying to our weakness and imperfection; for, truly, in the ability to overcome and kill one another, to despoil and injure our own species, there is not much to make it desired by those beasts who have it not.

(*b*) Quando leoni
Fortior eripuit vitam leo? quo nemore unquam
Expiravit aper majoris dentibus apri? [2]

(*a*) But they are not, however, universally exempt from it; witness the furious encounters of honey-bees, and the enterprises of the chiefs of the two opposing armies: —

sæpe duobus
Regibus incessit magno discordia motu,
Continuoque animos vulgi et trepidantia bello
Corda licet longe præsciscere.[3]

[1] See Plutarch, *What animals are the most cunning.*

[2] When did a stronger lion ever deprive a lion of life? In what forest did a boar ever expire under the teeth of a stronger boar? — Juvenal, XV, 160.

[3] Often between two kings great strife begins to be moved, and there can immediately be discerned from afar the anger of the common people, their hearts eager for the fight. — Virgil, *Georgics*, IV, 67.

I never read this divine description that it does not seem to me that I there read a portrayal of human folly and futility. For those upheavals of war which carry us away with their dreadfulness and astound us; that storm of sound and outcries, —

(*b*) Fulgur ibi ad cœlum se tollit, totaque circum
Ære renidescit tellus, subterque virum vi
Excitur pedibus sonitus, clamoreque montes
Icti rejectant voces ad sidera mundi; [1] —

(*a*) that terrifying array of so many thousands of armed men; all that fury and ardour and courage — one could laugh in noting by what futile causes it is set in motion, and by what trivial causes suppressed;

Paridis propter narratur amorem
Græcia Barbariæ diro collisa duello; [2]

all Asia was ruined and destroyed by the wars arising from the lust of Paris. The craving of one single man, anger, sensuality, personal jealousy, — causes which ought not to excite two fish-wives to blows,[3] — are the soul and the motive of all this vast disturbance. Shall we believe the very men who are the chief authors and movers? Let us listen to the greatest, the most victorious Emperor, and the most powerful, that ever lived, making merry, and turning into a jest, very amusingly and wittily, many battles hazarded both by sea and land, the blood and lives of five hundred thousand men who followed his fortunes, and the strength and riches of two parts of the world, all exhausted in the service of his undertakings: —

Quod futuit Glaphyran Antonius, hanc mihi pœnam
Fulvia constituit se quoque uti futuam.
Fulviam ego ut futuam? Quid, si me Manius oret
Pædicem, faciam? Non puto, si sapiam.

[1] Then the glitter rises to the sky, and the whole earth around gleams with brass, and a noise is raised by the mighty trampling of men, and the mountains, struck by the shouting, reverberate the sound to the stars of heaven. — Lucretius, II, 325.

[2] It is narrated that Greece was hurled into a long war against a barbarian country because of the love of Paris. — Horace, *Epistles*, I, 2.6.

[3] *Qui ne devroient esmouvoir deux harangeres à s'esgratigner.*

Aut futue, aut pugnemus, ait. Quid, si mihi vita
Charior est ipsa mentula? Signa canant.[1]

(I make use of my Latin with a free mind, from the permission you [2] have given me about this.) Now this great body, with so many aspects and motions, which seems to menace heaven and earth, —

(*b*) Quam multi Lybico volvuntur marmore fluctus,
Sævus ubi Orion hybernis conditur undis,
Vel cum sole novo densæ torrentur aristæ,
Aut Hermi campo, aut Lyciæ flaventibus arvis,
Scuta sonant, pulsuque pedum tremit excita tellus, [3] —

(*a*) this furious monster with so many arms and so many heads is still man, feeble, unfortunate, and miserable. It is but an ant-hill stirred up and excited; [4]

It nigrum campis agmen.[5]

A gust of adverse wind, the croaking of a flight of ravens, the stumble of a horse, the chance passage of an eagle, a dream, a word, a sign, a morning mist, suffice to overthrow and prostrate it. Let but a ray of sunlight strike its face: lo! it melts away and vanishes; let a little dust be blown in its eyes, as with the bees of our poet: lo! all the standards, the legions, and the great Pompey himself at their head, are broken and shattered; for it was he, if I remember right, whom Sertorius defeated in Spain with that fine weapon,[6] (*b*) the like of which has served others also, as, for instance, Eumenes against Antigonus,[7] and Surena against Crassus.[8]

[1] Martial, XI, 21.3. Said to have been written by Augustus.

[2] Some princess; probably Catherine de Bourbon, sister of Henri IV.

[3] As numerous as the waves that roll in the Marmorean sea of Libya, when fell Orion is hidden by the storms of winter, or as the numberless ears of corn that are parched by the young sun in the plains of the Hermus, or in the yellow fields of Lycia, the shields resound, and the earth trembles, agitated by the tread of feet. — Virgil, *Æneid*, VII, 718.

[4] See Seneca, *Natural Questions*, Preface. Montaigne took the comparison, and the line from the *Æneid*, from the same page of Seneca.

[5] The black troop goes over the fields. — Virgil, *Æneid*, IV, 404.

[6] That is, dust. See Plutarch, *Life of Sertorius*. Montaigne did not remember right: it was not Pompey, but the Characitanians.

[7] See Idem, *Life of Eumenes*.

[8] See Idem, *Life of Marcus Crassus*.

(*a*) Hi motus animorum atque hæc certamina tanta
Pulveris exigui jactu compressa quiescent.[1]

(*c*) Let us but loose some of our flies upon it: [2] they will have both the strength and the courage to scatter it. Within recent memory, the Portuguese besieging the city of Tamly in the province of Xiatime, its inhabitants carried to the walls a great quantity of hives, in which they are rich, and with fire drove the bees so vigorously upon the enemy that, unable to sustain their assaults and stings, they were put to rout. Thus victory and the freedom of the city were attained by this novel succour, with such fortune that, on returning from the fight, there was not a single one [3] missing.

(*a*) The souls of emperors and cobblers are cast in the same mould. Considering the importance of the acts of princes and their weight, we are persuaded that they are induced by causes as weighty and important. We are deceived: they are pushed forward and drawn back [4] in their movements by the same springs that move us. The same reason that makes us wrangle with a neighbour brings on a war between princes; the same reason that makes us whip a lackey, acting upon a king, makes him ruin a province. (*b*) Their will moves as quickly as ours, but they have more power.[5] (*a*) Similar desires stir in a worm and in an elephant.[6]

As for fidelity, there is no animal in the world so treacherous as man. Our histories narrate the earnestness with which certain dogs have followed up the death of their masters. King Pyrrhus, having observed a dog that was watching a dead man, and having learned that for three days he had been performing that office, ordered the body to be buried and took the dog with him. One day, when he was present at the general muster of his army, this dog, having espied his master's murderers, rushed upon them with great

[1] This stir of passion and these fierce fights are quieted if a little dust be thrown on them. — Virgil, *Georgics*, IV, 86.

[2] *Qu'on descouple mesmes de nos mouches apres.*

[3] Of the bees. See Goulard, *History of Portugal.*

[4] *Menez et ramenez.*

[5] *Ils veulent aussi legierement que nous, mais ils peuvent plus.*

[6] This paragraph, save the interpolation of (*b*), is an addition of 1582.

barking and fierceness of anger, and by this first indication led the way to vengeance for that murder, which very soon after was done by course of justice.[1] Not less did the dog of Hesiod the sage, who convicted the children of Ganystor of Naupactus of the murder committed on the body of his master. Another dog, set to guard a temple at Athens, having espied a sacrilegious thief who was carrying away the finest jewels, began to bark at him as loud as he could; but, the guardians not being awakened by that, he undertook to follow him, and when daylight came, he kept a little farther away from him without losing sight of him. If the man offered him food, he would have none of it; and on the other travellers that he met on the road he fawned and wagged his tail,[2] and took from their hands what they gave him to eat. If his thief stopped to sleep, he stopped, too, at the same place. The story of this dog having reached the ears of the church-guardians, they followed on his track, asking news of a dog of that breed; [3] and at last they found him in the city of Cromyon, and the thief also, whom they took back to the city of Athens, where he was punished. And the judges, in recognition of that useful service, ordered from the public store a certain measure of wheat for the dog's sustenance, and bade the priests take charge of him. Plutarch witnesses to this story as well authenticated, and as having happened in his time.

As for gratitude (for it seems to me that we need to bring this word into favour), this one example will suffice here, which Apion [4] narrates as having been himself a witness of it. One day, he says, when the populace were given the pleasure of combats between several unfamiliar beasts, and chiefly lions of unusual size, there was one of these who, by his fierce bearing, by the strength and size of his limbs, and by his superb and terrifying roaring, attracted the eyes of all present. Among the other slaves who were exhibited to the

[1] See Plutarch, *What animals are the most cunning*, for this and the following examples relating to dogs.

[2] *Il leur faisoit feste de la queue.*

[3] *S'enquerans des nouvelles du poil de ce chien.*

[4] Montaigne took this story almost verbatim from Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticæ*, V, 14. Gellius cites it from "Apion, qui Plistoricus appellatus est, literis homo multis preditus."

people in this combat of beasts was one Androdus[1] of Dacia, who belonged to a Roman noble of consular rank. This lion, having spied him from afar, first stopped short, as if struck with wonder, then quietly approached him, in a gentle and peaceable way, as if beginning to recognise him. This done, and having assured himself of what he sought, he began to wag his tail after the fashion of dogs fawning on their masters, and to kiss and lick the hands and thighs of that poor wretch, who was half dead and beside himself with fright. Androdus having recovered his wits by reason of the lion's benignity, and having observed him fixedly and recognised him,[2] it was a singular pleasure to see the caresses and rejoicings that they interchanged with each other. At which the populace having shouted with joy, the Emperor sent for this slave, to hear from him the cause of so strange an occurrence. He told him a novel and wonderful tale.

"My master," he said, "being proconsul in Africa, I was compelled, by the cruelty and severity with which he treated me, causing me to be beaten every day, to escape from him and run away. And to conceal myself securely from a personage whose authority in the province was so great, I thought it best to get to the solitary places and the sandy and uninhabitable regions of that country, resolved, if the means of sustaining life should fail me, to find some way of killing myself. The sun being excessively hot at noon, and the heat insupportable, having come upon a hidden and inaccessible cavern, I entered it. Very soon after, this lion came into it, with a wounded and bleeding paw, moaning and groaning from the pain he was suffering. I was greatly frightened by his arrival; but he, seeing me cowering in a corner of his den, approached me very gently, holding out his injured paw and shewing it to me, as if to ask aid. I thereupon took out a large splinter that was in it, and becoming a little familiar with him, I pressed the wound and squeezed out the matter that had collected in it, wiped it, and cleaned it as well as I could. He, finding himself rid of his trouble and relieved from his pain, betook himself to rest and to sleep, still leaving his paw in my hand. Thence-

[1] Androcles.

[2] *Ayant r'asseurê sa veue pour le considerer et reconnoistre.*

forward he and I lived together in that cavern three whole years, on the same food; for he brought me the best bits of the beasts that he killed in his hunting, and I cooked them in the sun for lack of fire, and lived upon them. At length, having grown weary of that brutish and savage life, this lion having gone forth one day on his wonted quest, I departed thence; and on my third day's journey I was captured by the soldiers who brought me from Africa to this city, to my master, who speedily condemned me to death and to be given to the beasts. Now, by what I see, this lion was also taken very soon after, who would to-day recompense me for the benefit and cure which he received from me."

This was the tale that Androdus told the Emperor, which he also caused to pass from one to another amongst the people. Whereupon, at the request of all, he was set free and absolved from that sentence, and by popular decree he was made a present of the lion. We saw afterwards, Apion says, Androdus leading the lion by a light leash, going about amongst the taverns of Rome, receive the money that was given him, the lion letting himself be covered with the flowers that were thrown to him; and every one said on meeting them: "There is the lion who was the man's host; there is the man who was the lion's doctor."

(*b*) We often weep for the loss of the beasts we love; so also do they, for our loss: —

> Post, bellator equus, positis insignibus, Æthon
> It lachrymans, guttisque humectat grandibus ora.[1]

While some of our nations have wives in common, some have each man his own. Is not the same thing true also among beasts? and marriages better kept than ours? (*a*) As for the association and confederation which they form among themselves, to league themselves together and assist one another, we see in the case of oxen, hogs, and other animals, that, at the outcry of one that you harm, the whole troop runs to its assistance and joins for its defence. When the scarus has followed the fisher's bait, his like gather in a crowd about

[1] Behind comes the battle-horse, Æthon, deprived of trappings, weeping, and his face wet with great tears. — Virgil, *Æneid*, XI, 89.

him and gnaw the line; and if by chance one has been taken in a hoop-net, the others turn toward him, their tails outside, and he seizes hold with his teeth as tight as he can; they pull him out thus, and draw him away. The mullets, when one of their like is caught, put the line across their backs, erecting a saw-toothed spine that they have, with which they saw and sever it.[1]

As for the special offices which we receive from one another for assistance in life,[2] many similar examples may be observed among them. It is believed that the whale in swimming is always preceded by a small fish resembling the sea-gudgeon, which is consequently called the guide; the whale follows him, letting himself be led and turned as easily as the helm makes the ship turn; and, whereas every thing else, whether beast or boat, that enters the horrible chaos of that monster's mouth is instantly lost and swallowed up, this little fish, by way of recompense, enters into it with perfect security and sleeps there; and during his sleep the whale does not budge; but, as soon as he goes forth, she follows him again without pause; and if by chance she is parted from him, she wanders to and fro, often brushing against the cliffs, like a ship without a rudder; which Plutarch witnesses to have seen in the island of Anticyra.[3] There is a similar association between the little bird called the wren and the crocodile: the wren acts as sentinel for that great creature; and if the ichneumon, his enemy, comes near, to fight him, this little bird, for fear lest he be surprised in his sleep, awakes him by singing, and by pecking warns him of his danger. He lives on the leavings of the monster, who admits him freely into his mouth, and allows him to peck in his jaws and between his teeth, and take from them the bits of flesh that have remained there; and if he wishes to shut his mouth, he first warns him to go forth, closing it little by little, without squeezing or hurting him.[4]

[1] For these two examples, see Plutarch, *What animals are the most cunning*.

[2] In 1580 and 1582: *pour le service de sa vie, de certains animaux ou des hommes*.

[3] See Plutarch, *What animals are the most cunning*.

[4] See *Ibid*.

The shell-fish that is called the *nacre* lives in the same way with the shrimp, which is a small creature of the crab species, acting as her usher and porter, seated at the entrance of the shell which he keeps always gaping and open, until he sees some small fish enter in, suitable for their capture; then he goes into the nacre and pinches her to the quick, and forces her to shut her shell; then the two together devour the prey imprisoned in their fortress.[1]

In the mode of life of the tunny-fish there may be observed a strange acquaintance with the three branches of mathematics. As for astrology,[2] they teach it to man; for they remain in the place where the winter solstice surprises them, and do not budge until the ensuing equinox; because of this, even Aristotle freely concedes this art to them. As for geometry and arithmetic, they always form their schools in the figure of a cube, every way square, and fashion of it a solid battalion, close and bounded on all sides [3] by six perfectly equal faces; then they swim in this square order, as broad behind as before, so that he who sees and counts one row can easily number the whole troop, since the number of the depth is equal to the width and the width to the length.[4] As for magnanimity, it is hard to give a more visible manifestation of it than in the action of the great dog that was sent from the Indies to King Alexander. They brought before him, first, a stag, to fight with him, and then a boar, and then a bear; he paid no heed to them, and did not deign to stir from his place; but when he saw a lion, he sprang instantly to his feet, showing plainly that he declared that alone worthy to do battle with him.[5]

(*b*) Touching repentance and acknowledgement of misdeeds, there is a tale of an elephant who, having killed his keeper in an outburst of anger, was seized with grief so extreme that he would never eat again, and let himself die.[6]

[1] See Plutarch, *What animals are the most cunning.*

[2] That is, the practical application of astronomy, as an art, to human uses.

[3] *Clos et environné tout à l'entour.*

[4] See Plutarch, *Ibid.*

[5] See *Ibid.*

[6] See Arrian of Nicomedia. Montaigne read Arrian in a translation (1581), called *Les faits et les conquestes d'Alexandre le Grand.*

(*a*) As for clemency, they tell of a tiger, the most inhuman of all beasts, that, having been given a kid, he endured hunger for two days before being willing to harm it; and the third day he broke the cage in which he was confined, to go in search of other food, being unwilling to attack the kid, his companion and guest.[1] And as for the rights of intimacy and concord which intercourse creates, we frequently bring up cats and dogs and hares together. But that which is known to those who travel by sea, and notably in the sea about Sicily, concerning the condition of the halcyons surpasses all human thought. Of what species of creature has ever Nature so honoured the child-bed, the birth, the travail? For the poets declare that the one island of Delos, being formerly a floating island, was made stationary for the service of the travail of Latona; but God has chosen that the whole ocean shall be stayed, made stationary and smooth, without waves, without wind, and without rain, while the halcyon brings forth her young, which is just about the time of the solstice, the shortest day of the year; and by virtue of her privilege, we have seven days and nights in the very heart of winter when we can sail the seas without danger. The females know no other male than their own, and accompany him all their lives without ever leaving him; if he becomes weak and old, they take him on their shoulders, carry him everywhere, and serve him until death. But no intelligence has yet succeeded in arriving at an understanding of that marvellous substance with which the halcyon builds the nest for her young, or to divine its composition. Plutarch, who saw and handled several of them, thought that it was the bones of some fish, which she joins and binds together, interlacing them, some lengthwise, others across, and adding ribs and roundings, so that at last she shapes a round vessel, prepared for launching; then, when she has completely finished constructing it, she takes it where the waves beat, where the sea, beating softly against it, teaches her to repair what is not well joined and better to strengthen the places where she sees that its structure is disturbed and loosened by the blows of the sea; and, on the other hand, where it is well joined, the beating of the sea presses it to-

[1] See Plutarch, *What animals are the most cunning.*

gether and tightens it,[1] so that it can be neither broken nor crumbled, nor injured by blows of stones or of iron, except with the utmost difficulty. And that which is most to be wondered at is the proportion and shape of the concavity within; for it is framed and proportioned in such wise that it can neither hold nor admit any thing but the bird that has built it; for to every thing else it is impenetrable, shut, and secured, so that nothing can enter, not even the sea-water.[2] This is a very clear description of this structure, and borrowed from a good source; but it seems to me that it still does not sufficiently explain to us the complexity of this architecture. Now, from what vanity in us can it proceed that we place below ourselves and interpret disdainfully actions which we can neither imitate nor understand? [3]

To follow out a little further this equality and resemblance between us and the beasts, the privilege our soul glorifies herself on, of reducing to her own condition whatever she conceives, of divesting of mortal and corporeal qualities whatever comes to her, of marshalling the things that she deems worthy of her commerce, so as to remove and divest them of their corruptible conditions, and make them lay aside, as superfluous and mean garments, thickness, length, depth, weight, colour, odour, roughness, smoothness, hardness, softness, and all perceptible accidents, in order to adapt them to her immortal and spiritual nature; so Rome and Paris, which I have in my thoughts — the Paris which I conceive, I conceive and apprehend without dimension and without place, without stone, without plaster, and without wood — this same privilege, I say, seems very evidently to belong to beasts: for a horse accustomed to the sound of trumpets, of musketry, and of battle, whom we see quivering and trembling in his sleep, stretched on his litter as if he were in the fight — it is certain that he conceives in his

[1] *Le vous estreinct et vous le serre.*

[2] See Plutarch, *What animals are the most cunning;* Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, X, 32.

[3] Cf. *supra*, p. 222: *Elles* [*les bestes*] *produisent en encores d'autres qui surpassent de bien loin nostre capacité, ausquelles il s'en faut tant que nous puissions arriver par imitation que par imagination mesme nous ne les pouvons concevoir.*

thought the beat of the drum without noise, an army without arms and without body.

> Quippe videbis equos fortes, cum membra jacebunt
> In somnis, sudare tamen, spirareque sæpe,
> Et quasi de palma summas contendere vires.[1]

The hare that a greyhound conceives in his dream, in pursuit of which we see him, while he sleeps, panting, stiffening his tail, moving his legs convulsively, and imitating perfectly the motions of running — it is a hare without flesh and without bone.

> Venantumque canes in molli sæpe quiete
> Jactant crura tamen subito, vocesque repente
> Mittunt, et crebras reducunt naribus auras,
> Ut vestigia si teneant inventa ferarum,
> Experge factique sequuntur inania sæpe
> Cervorum simulacra, fugæ quasi dedita cernant;
> Donec discussis redeant erroribus ad se.[2]

The watch-dogs whom we often hear to growl while dreaming, then bark and wake with a start, as if they perceived some stranger coming — this stranger whom their mind sees is a ghostly [3] and imperceptible man, without dimension, without colour, and without existence: —

> consueta domi catulorum blanda propago
> Degere, sæpe levem ex oculis volucremque soporem
> Discutere, et corpus de terra corripere instant,
> Proinde quasi ignotas facies atque ora tuantur.[4]

[1] You will see powerful horses, though they lie stretched out in sleep, yet often sweat and pant, and exert all their strength, as if striving for the prize. — Lucretius, IV, 987.

[2] The dogs of hunters in soft slumber yet often suddenly move their legs, and bark, and repeatedly sniff the air with their nostrils, as if they had found and were on the track of wild beasts; and when they wake, they often chase imaginary stags, as if they saw them in flight, until their mistake is dissipated and they come to themselves. — Idem, IV, 991.

[3] *Spirituel.*

[4] And the fawning brood of dogs brought up in the house awake from light and fleeting slumber, and leap from the ground as if they beheld unknown faces and features. — Lucretius, IV, 998. The second line is not found in modern texts.

As for bodily beauty, before going further I must needs know whether we are in agreement as to its description. It is probable that we scarcely know what natural and general beauty is, since we give so many different forms to our own beauty, (*c*) for which, if there were any natural law, we should all alike recognise it, as we do the heat of fire. We create its forms in imagination, according to our liking.

(*b*) Turpis Romano Belgicus ore color.[1]

(*a*) The Indians depict it as dark and tawny, with large and thick lips and a flat, broad nose. (*b*) And they weight with large gold rings the cartilage between the nostrils, to make it hang down to the mouth; as also the lower lip, with large hoops enriched with precious stones, so that it falls on the chin; and it is with them a seemliness to show their teeth, even below the roots.[2] (*a*) In Peru the largest ears are the most beautiful, and they stretch them as much as they can by artificial means;[3] (*c*) and a man of our day says that, in an Eastern nation, he found this sedulousness in enlarging them, as in weighting them with heavy jewels, in such favour, that often he passed his sleeved arm through the hole in the ear.[4] (*b*) There are nations, too, who blacken their teeth with great care and look with scorn on white ones; elsewhere, they stain them red.[5] (*c*) Not only in Basque do the women think themselves more beautiful with their heads shaved, but in many other places; and, what is more, in certain very cold countries, so Pliny says.[6] (*b*) The Mexican women count as a beauty smallness of the forehead; and, although they shave the hair on all the rest of the body, they cultivate it and increase it on the forehead by art; and they hold in such high esteem the largeness of the breast that they try to be able to suckle their children over their shoulder.[7]

[1] The complexion of a Belgian ill becomes a Roman face. — Propertius, II, 18.26.

[2] See Gomara, *Histoire Gênêrale des Indes*.

[3] See *Ibid*.

[4] See Gasparo Balbi, *Travels in India*.

[5] See Gomara, *ubi sup*.

[6] See Pliny, *Nat. Hist*., VI, 13.

[7] See Gomara, *ubi sup*.

(*a*) We should thus depict ugliness.[1] The Italians figure beauty as full and massive; the Spaniards as thin and slender; and amongst us one makes it white, another brown; one, soft and delicate, another, strong and vigorous; this one demands kindness and sweetness,[2] that one, pride and dignity. (*c*) In like manner, the greater beauty which Plato ascribes to the spherical shape,[3] the Epicureans give rather to the pyramidal, or square, and can not swallow a god shaped like a ball.[4]

(*a*) But however it may be, Nature has not more privileged us in this matter [5] than elsewise regarding her universal laws. And if we consider ourselves carefully, we shall find that, if there are some animals less favoured in this respect than we are, there are others, and in great numbers, who are more so; (*c*) *a multis animalibus decore vincimur*,[6] yes, even terrestrial ones, our compatriots; for, as for those of the sea (setting aside the shape, which can not enter into the comparison,[7] so different is it), in colouring, cleanliness, smoothness, nimbleness, we are much inferior to them; and not less in all qualities to those of the air. (*a*) And the prerogative, which poets rate high, of our erect posture, looking toward heaven, to which it is akin,[8] —

> Pronaque cum spectent animalia cætera terram,
> Os homini sublime dedit, cœlumque videre
> Jussit, et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus,[9] —

[1] This sentence refers back to the statement as to the Peruvians' preference for large ears (p. 240), the intervening passages having been added in 1588 or 1595.

[2] *Qui y demande de la mignardise et de la douceur.*

[3] See Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, I, 10. Cicero refers to a passage in the *Timæus*.

[4] See *Ibid.*

[5] That is, in the matter of beauty.

[6] We are surpassed in beauty by many animals. — Seneca, *Epistle* 124.22.

[7] *Qui ne peut tumber en proportion.*

[8] *Vers le ciel son origine* — a puzzling phrase.

[9] And while the other animals, stooping, look down on the ground, he has given men a lofty stature, and has commanded them to regard the sky, and, standing erect, to lift their gaze to the stars. — Ovid, *Metam.*, I, 84.

is really poetic; for there are several little beasts that have their sight turned wholly toward heaven; and the setting of the head of camels and ostriches I find to be more raised and upright than ours. (*c*) What animals have not the face high up and have it not in front, and looking straight forward, like ourselves, and do not, in their natural posture, discover as much of the sky and earth as man? And what qualities of our bodily constitution, in Plato and in Cicero, do not bestead a thousand sorts of beast? [1] (*a*) Those which most resemble us are the ugliest and most despicable of the whole troop; for, as to the outward aspect and form of the visage, they are the apes: —

(*c*) Simia quam similis, turpissima bestia, nobis! [2]

(*a*) as to the interior and vital part, it is the hog. Certainly, when I think of man quite naked (yes, and that sex which seems to have the greater share of beauty), his blemishes, his natural tendency to deformities, and his imperfections, I find that we have had more reason than any other animal to cover ourselves. We have been excusable in borrowing from those whom Nature in that respect had favoured more than us, in order to adorn ourselves with their beauty and hide ourselves under what we pillage from them — wool, feathers, skins, silk.

Furthermore, let us observe that we are the only animals whose defects offend our own fellows, and the only ones who have to withdraw from our kind in our natural acts. Truly, it is a fact worthy of consideration that the masters of the profession prescribe as a remedy for amorous passion the complete and unhampered sight of the body that is sought; and that, to cool affection, we need only to see freely the person we love: —

Ille quod obscœnas in aperto corpore partes
Viderat, in cursu qui fuit, hæsit amor.[3]

And although this description may perchance proceed from a somewhat fastidious and cold humour, still is it a won-

[1] See Plato, *Timæus*, *passim;* Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, II, 53 *et seq.*

[2] How like us is the ape, the most ignoble of animals! — Ennius, in Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, I, 35.

[3] Ovid, *De Remedio Amoris*, 429. The same thought is in the text.

drous token of our weakness that habit and knowledge disgust us with one another. (*b*) It is not so much pudicity as guile and prudence that renders our ladies so circumspect in denying us admission to their chambers before they are painted and adorned for public exhibition;

(*a*) Nec veneres nostras hoc fallit; quo magis ipsæ,
Omnia summo opere hos vitæ post scænia celant,
Quos retinere volunt adstrictosque esse in amore; [1]

whereas, in many animals, there is no part of them that we do not like and that does not please our senses, so that from their very excrement and from their evacuations we derive not only dainties for eating, but our richest ornaments and perfume. These remarks touch only our common sort of women, and are not so sacrilegious as to intend to include those divine, supernatural, and extraordinary beauties that we see sometimes shining amongst us like stars beneath a corporeal and terrestrial veil.

As to the rest, even the share of the favour of Nature that we, by our own confession, allow to animals, is very much to their advantage. We attribute to ourselves imaginary and fanciful goods, future and absent goods, for which the human understanding can not of itself even be answerable; or goods which we attribute to ourselves falsely, by the license of our judgement, like reason, knowledge, and honour; and we abandon to them,[2] for their share, the essential, easily obtainable, palpable goods: peace, repose, security, innocence, and health; health, I say — the fairest and richest gift that Nature can bestow upon us. So that Philosophy, even the Stoic, actually ventures to say that Heraclitus and Pherecides, if they could have exchanged their reason for health and have freed themselves by that bargain, the one from dropsy, the other from the pest of lice that tormented him, would have done well. Whereby they give even greater value to wisdom, comparing it and balancing it with health, than they give to that other quality which also is theirs.

[1] Nor is this unknown to our Venuses; wherefore all the more they themselves hide with the utmost pains all that goes on behind the scenes of life from those whom they wish to retain in the charms of love. — Lucretius, IV, 1185.

[2] That is, to animals.

They say that, if Circe had offered Ulysses two kinds of drink, one to change a fool to a wise man, the other, a wise man to a fool, Ulysses should rather have accepted the one causing folly, than consent that Circe should change the human form to that of a beast; and they say that wisdom herself would have spoken to him thus: "Forsake me, depart from me, rather than lodge me under the likeness and body of an ass." [1] What? This noble and divine wisdom — do the philosophers then forsake it for this corporeal and terrestrial veil? [2] It is, then, no longer by reason, by thought, and by the soul, that we surpass the beasts: it is by our beauty, our beautiful colouring and the beautiful arrangement of our limbs, for which we must set at naught our intelligence, our knowledge, and all the rest.

Now, I accept this ingenuous and frank confession. Surely they knew that these qualities, which we extol so highly, are but vain imaginings. If, then, beasts possessed all the Stoic virtues, learning, wisdom, and competence, they would still be beasts; nor would they be comparable to a wretched, wicked, and senseless man. (*c*) For, in short, whatever is not like us is not to be esteemed.[3] And God himself, to make himself esteemed, must resemble us, as we shall soon see. (*a*) Whence it appears that it is not from true reasoning, but from a foolish and obstinate pride, that we prefer ourselves to other animals, and sequester ourselves from their estate and companionship.

But, to return to my subject: we have for our share inconstancy, irresolution, uncertainty, sorrow, superstition, solicitude about things to come even after our life, ambition, covetousness, jealousy, envy, unbridled appetites, furious and untameable, war, falsehood, disloyalty, detraction, and curiosity. Surely we have strangely paid too much for this fine reasoning power on which we pride ourselves, and this faculty of judging and knowing, if we have bought them at the price of the endless number of afflictions to which we are incessantly subject. (*b*) S'il ne nous plaist de faire encore valoir, comme faict bien Socrates, cette notable prerogative sur les autres animaux, que, où nature leur a prescript

[1] See Plutarch, *Common conceptions against the Stoics.*

[2] *Ce masque corporel.*

[3] *N'est rien qui vaille.*

certaines saisons et limites à la volupté Venerienne, elle nous en a lasché la bride à toutes heures et occasions.[1] (*c*) *Ut vinum ægrotis, quia prodest raro, nocet sæpissime, melius est non adhibere omnino, quam, spe dubiæ salutis, in apertam perniciem incurrere; sic haud scio an melius fuerit humano generi motum istum celerem cogitationis, acumen, solertiam, quam rationem vocamus, quoniam pestifera sint multis, admodum paucis salutaria, non dari omnino, quam tam munifice et tam large dari.*[2]

(*a*) Of what value can we consider the understanding of so many things to have been to Varro and Aristotle? Did it exempt them from human ills? Were they freed from the misfortunes that lie heavy on a porter? Did they derive from logic any consolation for the gout? From knowing that this humour is lodged in the joints, did they feel it the less? Were they ready to accept death,[3] from knowing that some nations rejoice at it? and cuckoldry, from knowing that women are enjoyed in common in some parts of the world? [4] On the contrary, the one having held the first place in learning amongst the Romans, the other amongst the Greeks, and in the period when learning was most flourishing, we are not told that there was any peculiar excellence in their lives; indeed, the Greek has enough to do to clear himself from some notable blemishes in his.[5] (*b*) Has it been found that pleasure and health have a greater relish for him who understands astrology and grammar?

Illiterati num minus nervi rigent? [6]

and that shame and poverty are less troublesome?

[1] See Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, I, 4.12.

[2] Because wine, while sometimes beneficial, is most often harmful to a sick man, it is best not to offer it to him at all rather than, in hope of a doubtful cure, incur an evident danger. Similarly, I do not know whether it might not have been better had there not been given to mankind at all the quickness of thought, penetration, sagacity, which we call reason, — which are pernicious to many and salutary to few, — rather than to have bestowed them so munificently and widely. — Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, III, 27.

[3] *Sont ils entrez en composition de la mort.*

[4] In 1580 to 1588: *en quelques republiques.*

[5] See Cornelius Agrippa, *Of the uncertainty and vanity of learning.*

[6] Are the muscles of the unlettered less vigorous? — Horace, *Epodes*, VIII, 17.

Scilicet et morbis et debilitate carebis,
Et luctum et curam effugies, et tempora vitæ
Longa tibi post hæc fato meliore dabuntur.[1]

I have seen in my day a hundred artisans, a hundred labourers, wiser and happier than University vice-chancellors, and whom I should like better to resemble. Scholarship,[2] in my opinion, holds a place among things of value in life like a great name,[3] nobility of rank, dignity of position, or, at best, like beauty, wealth, (*b*) and other such qualities, which are indeed of service to life, but remotely, and more through imagination than by nature.

(*c*) We scarcely need more functions, rules, and laws of living in our community than the cranes and ants find necessary in theirs. With the few they have,[4] we see that they conduct themselves in a very orderly fashion without erudition. If man were wise, he would apprehend the real value of every thing according as it was the most useful and most suitable for his life. (*a*) Whoever shall reckon us by our acts and proceedings will find a greater number of excellent men among the ignorant than among the learned — I mean, in every sort of virtue. The old Rome seems to me to have brought forth men of greater worth, both for peace and for war, than that learned Rome which was ruined by herself. Even though the rest should be altogether similar, at least honesty and innocence would still be found on the side of the ancient city, for they consort singularly well with simplicity.

But I will leave this train of thought,[5] which would lead me further than I should care to follow. I will say only this in addition, that humility and submission alone can create a man to be respected.[6] The knowledge of his duty must not be left to each man's judgement: it must be prescribed for

[1] Doubtless you will henceforth be without sickness or weakness, and escape grief and anxiety, and longer life and happier fortunes will be given you. — Juvenal, XIV, 156.

[2] *La doctrine.*

[3] *La gloire.* In 1580 to 1588: *La doctrine est encores moins necessaire au service de la vie que n'est la gloire*, etc.

[4] *Et ce neantmoins.*

[5] *Ce discours.*

[6] *Qui peut effectuer un homme de bien.*

him; he must not be allowed to choose it at his will; [1] otherwise, in accordance with the foolishness and infinite variety of our reasons and opinions, we should end by devising for ourselves duties which would bring us to eating one another, as Epicurus says.[2] The first law that God ever gave man was a law of pure obedience; it was a bare and simple commandment, wherein there was nothing for man to examine and seek the reason for,[3] (*c*) inasmuch as to obey is the peculiar duty of a reasonable mind, recognising a heavenly superior and benefactor. From obedience and submission every other virtue is born, as every sin from pride. (*b*) And, on the contrary, the first temptation that came to human nature on the part of the devil, his first poison, insinuated itself into us by the promises he made us of learning and knowledge: *Eritis sicut dii, scientes bonum et malum.*[4] (*c*) And the Sirens, in Homer, to beguile Ulysses and to lure him into their dangerous and destructive snares, offer him knowledge as a gift.[5] (*a*) The deadly disease of man is the belief that he knows. That is why ignorance is so recommended to us by our religion, as a quality belonging to belief and to obedience. (*c*) *Cavete ne quis vos decipiat per philosophiam et inanes seductiones secundum elementa mundi.*[6]

(*a*) About this there is a general agreement among all philosophers of all schools, that the sovereign good consists in tranquillity of the soul and of the body. (*b*) But where do we find it?

(*a*) Ad summum, sapiens uno minor est Jove; dives,
Liber, honoratus, pulcher, rex denique regum;
Præcipue sanus, nisi cum pituita molesta est.[7]

[1] *A son discours.*

[2] See Plutarch, *Against Colotes the Epicurean.* Coste suggested this source. If Montaigne had it in mind, his memory betrayed him, for Plutarch's words have a different sense, and according to him, it was Colotes, not Epicurus, who said it.

[3] *Où l'homme n'eust rien à connoistre et à causer.*

[4] Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. — *Genesis*, III, 5.

[5] See Cicero, *De Fin.*, V, 18, alluding to *Odyssey*, XII, 188.

[6] Take heed that no man deceive you by philosophy and vain deceit, according to the elements of the world. — *Colossians*, II, 8.

[7] To conclude, the wise man is inferior to Jupiter; rich, free, honoured, well-favoured, in fine, the king of kings; above all, healthy, unless he is tormented by pituita. — Horace, *Epistles*, I, 1.106.

It seems, in truth, that nature, by way of consolation for our miserable and beggarly condition, has given us for our portion only presumption. It is what Epictetus says: that man has nothing properly his own save the fashion [1] of his opinions.[2] We have only wind and smoke for our portion. (*b*) The gods have health in their being, philosophy declares, and disease in their apprehension; man, on the contrary, possesses his goods in his imagination, his ills in his being.[3] (*a*) We have done well to make the most of the forces of our imagination; for all our blessings are only dream-like. Listen to this poor and unfortunate creature bluster: There is nothing, says Cicero, so delightful as the occupation with letters, with those letters, I mean, by which, even in this world, the infinitude of things, the immense grandeur of nature, the heavens and the dry lands and the seas are revealed to us;[4] it is they which have taught us religion, moderation, high-mindedness, and which have snatched our soul out of darkness to show her all things high, low, first, last, and between; it is they which supply us with the wherewithal to live rightly and happily, and guide us to pass our life without doing or suffering harm.[5] Does not this man seem to speak of the estate of God, ever-living and all-powerful? And in reality a thousand simple women in villages have lived more equable, gentler, and more constant lives than was his.

> Deus ille fuit, Deus, inclute Memmi,
> Qui princeps vitæ rationem invenit eam, quæ
> Nunc appellatur sapientia, quique per artem
> Fluctibus e tantis vitam tantisque tenebris
> In tam tranquillo et tam clara luce locavit.[6]

[1] *Usage = manière d'user quelque chose.*

[2] See Stobæus, *Sermon* 21. The passage of Epictetus referred to is in the *Enchiridion*, XI.

[3] See Plutarch, *Common conceptions against the Stoics.*

[4] See Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, V, 36. Cicero is speaking of *philosophia.*

[5] *Sans desplaisir et sans offence.* See *Ibid.*, I, 26.

[6] A god he was, a god, most noble Memmius, who first discovered that plan of life which is now called wisdom, and who, by trained skill, rescued life from such great billows and such thick darkness, and placed it in such a calm and bright light. — Lucretius, V, 8. This quotation and the sentence following were added in 1582.

Here are most stately and glorious words; but a very slight accident put the intelligence of this man [1] in a worse condition than that of the humblest shepherd, notwithstanding this instructing god [2] and this divine wisdom. Of equal effrontery is (*c*) that promise of the book of Democritus: "I am about to speak of all things";[3] and that absurd title that Aristotle bestows upon us, of mortal gods;[4] and (*a*) that judgement of Chrysippus, that Dion was as virtuous as God.[5] And my Seneca recognises, he says, that God gave him life, but that he has from himself the living rightly;[6] (*c*) agreeing with this other: *In virtute vere gloriamur; quod non contingeret, si id donum a deo, non a nobis haberemus.*[7] This again is from Seneca: that the wise man is as free from fear as God, but with human weakness; whereby he surpasses him.[8] (*a*) There is nothing so common as to find instances of such audacity. There is not one of us who is as much displeased to see himself compared with God as he is to see himself brought down to the level of the other animals; so much more jealous are we of our own interests than of that of our creator.

But we must tread under foot this foolish vanity, and vigorously and boldly shatter the ridiculous foundations on which these false beliefs are built. So long as he thinks that he has any means and any strength in himself, man will never recognise what he owes to his master; he will always make chickens of his eggs, as they say; he must be stripped to his shirt. Let us observe some notable example of the effect of his philosophy. Possidonius, suffering from a malady so painful that it made him wring his hands and grind his teeth, thought to spite the pain [9] by crying out to it:

[1] Lucretius.
[2] Epicurus.
[3] See Cicero, *Academica*, II, 23.
[4] See Idem, *De Fin.*, II, 13.
[5] See Plutarch, *Common conceptions against the Stoics.*
[6] See Seneca, *Epistle* 22. 17.
[7] We justly take pride in our virtue, which we should abstain from if it were a gift from God, not from ourselves. — Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, III, 36.
[8] See Seneca, *Epistle* 53.
[9] *Bien faire la figue à la douleur.* See Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, II, 25.

"Do what thou wilt, yet I will not admit that thou art evil." He feels the same tortures as my lackey, but he prides himself upon keeping his tongue at least under the laws of his sect.[1] (*c*) *Re succumbere non oportebat verbis gloriantem.*[2] When Arcesilaus was ill of the gout, Carneades, who came to visit him, went away greatly concerned; he called him back and, pointing to his feet and his breast, "Nothing has come hither thence," he said.[3] This man takes it with a little better grace, for he feels that he has pain and would like to be rid of it; but nevertheless, his heart is not cast down and enfeebled by that pain. The firmness that the other maintains is, I fear, more verbal than essential. And Dionysius Heracleotes, afflicted with a sharp smarting in his eyes, was fain to forsake these Stoic resolutions.[4]

(*a*) But even if learning does in fact do what they claim, — somewhat dull and diminish the sharpness of the misfortunes that follow after us, — what does it do that ignorance does not do much more simply and more manifestly? The philosopher Pyrrho, incurring at sea the perils of a great storm, suggested to those who were with him merely to imitate the fearlessness of a pig, which was on the vessel with them and which regarded the tempest without terror.[5] Philosophy, at the end of her precepts, sends us to the examples of an athlete and a muleteer, in whom we commonly observe much less concern about death, pain, and other disagreeable things, and more firmness than learning ever gives to any one not born and prepared for them in himself by a natural habit of mind. How is it that we lance and slash the tender limbs of a child more easily than our own, if it be not ignorance? (*c*) And those of a horse? (*a*) How many people has the power of the imagination alone made sick? We often see them having themselves bled, purged, and dosed, to cure ills which they feel only in their fancy.

[1] In 1580 to 1588: *Ce n'est que vent et paroles.*

[2] After boastful words it was unfitting to succumb to the fact. — Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, II, 13.

[3] See Cicero, *De Fin.*, V, 31.

[4] See *Ibid.*

[5] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Pyrrho.* Montaigne used the same example, to draw therefrom a different moral, in chapter 14 of Book I (Vol. I, p. 70).

When real ills fail us, then learning lends us hers. That colour and that complexion presage for you some rheumatic inflammation; this hot season threatens you with a feverish attack; this break in the line of life in your left hand warns you of some serious indisposition near at hand. And at last she [1] flatly addresses herself to health itself. This youthful animation and vigour can not remain as it is; we must take from it life and strength, for fear that it do you harm. Compare the life of a man subjected to such fancies with that of a labourer who lets himself go according to his natural liking, measuring things only by his immediate sensations, without learning and without prognostication; who has pain only when he has it; whereas the other often has the stone in his soul before he has it in his bladder; as if it were not time enough to suffer pain when it is there, he forestalls it in imagination, and runs to meet it.

What I say of medicine may be applied generally by way of example to all learning. Thence arose that ancient opinion of the philosophers, who placed sovereign good in the recognition of the feebleness of our judgement. My ignorance gives me as much ground for hope as for fear, and having no other rule for my health than that drawn from the example of others and from happenings that I see elsewhere in like cases, I find them of all sorts, and rest on the comparisons that are most favourable to me. I welcome health with open arms, free, full, and complete, and sharpen my appetite to enjoy it, so much the more because it is now [2] less usual with me and more rare: so far am I from disturbing its peace and pleasantness by a novel and restricted mode of life. The beasts show us plainly enough how the agitation of our minds brings sickness upon us.

(*c*) That which we are told of the people of Brazil, that they died of nothing but old age, is attributed to the serenity and tranquillity of their climate; I attribute it, rather, to the tranquillity and serenity of their souls, freed from all perturbation and care and laborious or unpleasant occupation, like people who passed their lives in admirable simplicity and ignorance, without letters, without law, without

[1] That is, learning.

[2] *A present;* added in 1588.

king, without any kind of religion. Et d'où vient, ce qu'on voit par experience, que les plus grossiers et plus lours sont plus fermes et plus desirables aux executions amoureuses, et que l'amour d'un muletier se rend souvent plus acceptable que celle d'un galant homme, sinon que en cetuy cy l'agitation de l'ame trouble sa force corporelle, la rompt et lasse? [1]Comme elle lasse aussi et trouble ordinairement soymesmes. What agitates it,[2] what drives it into madness, more commonly than its quickness, its keenness, its agility — in a word, its own strength? (*b*) Of what is the most subtle folly made but of the most subtle wisdom? As from great friendships are born great enmities, and from vigorous health, mortal maladies, so from the precious and vivid workings of our minds come the most extreme and most out-of-the-way delusions; it needs but the slightest change to pass from one to the other.

(*a*) By the actions of insane men we see how easily folly connects itself with the most vigorous operations of our minds. Who does not know how imperceptible is the boundary line between madness and the gallant flights of a free spirit and the condition of a supreme and extraordinary virtue? Plato says that the melancholy-minded are the most teachable and excellent; also, there are none who have so great a proneness to insanity. Numberless minds are ruined by their own strength and pliability. What a fall has just been sustained, due to native emotion and excitability, by a poet more judicious, brilliant, and better formed in the atmosphere of old, pure poesy than any other Italian poet has been for a long time![3] Has he not reason to be grateful to that murderous activity of his mind? to that brilliancy which blinded him? to that exact and wide [4] apprehension of reason which deprived him of reason? to the over-diligent and toilsome quest for knowledge which led him to stupidity? to that rare aptitude for exercises of the mind which

[1] The text from this point to "its own strength" (line 10), and from "By the actions of insane men" (line 17), to "indolence and dulness" (p. 253, line 8), was added in the second edition (1582).

[2] The soul.

[3] Torquato Tasso was confined in a hospital at Ferrara from 1579 to 1586.

[4] *Tendue.*

has left him without exercise and without mind? I felt even more exasperation than compassion, seeing him at Ferrara in such a piteous state, surviving himself, neglectful both of himself and of his works, which, without his knowledge and yet in his sight, have been sent abroad into the world [1] unamended and unshaped. Would you have a man sound, would you have him self-controlled and of a firm and secure attitude? enwrap him in obscurity, indolence, and dulness. (*c*) We must be stultified to become wise, and blinded, to be led. (*a*) And if I am told that the advantage of having our sensibility to pains and ills cold and dull brings with it the disadvantage of making us consequently less keen also, and delicate in our enjoyment of goods and pleasures, that is true; but the wretchedness of our state is such, that we have not so much to enjoy as to avoid; [2] and that extreme pleasure does not affect us so much as a slight pain. (*c*) *Segnius homines bona quam mala sentiunt.*[3] (*a*) We do not feel perfect health so much as the least sickness.

Pungit
In cute vix summa violatum plagula corpus,
Quando valere nihil quemquam movet. Hoc juvat unum,
Quod me non torquet latus aut pes; cætera quisquam
Vix queat aut sanum sese, aut sentire valentem.[4]

Our well-being is only the absence of ill-being. This is why the school of philosophy that set the highest value on pleasure, yet placed it as merely freedom from pain.[5] To have no ill is the greatest good that man can hope for; (*c*) as Ennius said: —

(*c*) Nimium boni est, cui nihil est mali.[6]

[1] *On a mis en lumiere.*

[2] *Tant à desirer qu'à craindre.*

[3] Men feel less keenly what is good than what is ill. — Livy, XXX, 21.

[4] The body feels keenly what scarcely harms the surface of the skin, while health is not at all perceived by it. A man rejoices that neither his side nor his foot hurts him; but otherwise he knows hardly at all whether or not he is in good health and vigour. — La Boëtie.

[5] *À la seule indolence.*

[6] A man is too fortunate who has no ill fortune. — Quoted in Cicero, *De Fin.*, II, 13.

(*a*) For the same delightful excitement and exhilaration [1] that we feel in certain pleasures, and that seems to lift us above simple health and freedom from pain; this active, stirring — and, I know not how, stinging and biting — pleasure; even this aims only at freedom from pain as its mark. The appetite that drives us to commerce with women seeks only to banish the distress caused by ardent and fierce desire, and asks only to satisfy itself and to settle down in repose and in freedom from that fever. And so with the others.

I say, therefore, that, if ignorance puts us in the way of having no ills, it puts us in the way of a very fortunate state, considering our circumstances. (*c*) But we must not imagine it so complete as to be altogether without feeling. For Crantor was well advised to combat the freedom from pain of Epicurus, if its foundations went so deep that even the approach and birth of evils were lacking to it. I do not praise such freedom from pain, which is neither possible nor to be desired. I am glad not to be sick; but if I am so, I desire to know that I am; and if I am cauterised or bled, I desire to feel it. In truth, he who would destroy consciousness of pain would at the same time extirpate consciousness of pleasure, and, in short, would reduce man to nothingness: [2] *Istud nihil dolere, non sine magna mercede contingit immanitatis in animo, stuporis in corpore.*[3] Evil is well for man in its turn. Pain is not always to be shunned, nor pleasure always to be pursued.

(*a*) It is a very great gain for the honour of ignorance, that knowledge herself casts us into its arms when she finds herself unable to strengthen us against the burden of our ills; she is obliged to come to this accord, to loosen the reins, and give us leave to take refuge in the lap of ignorance and to shelter ourselves, under this protection, from the blows and affronts of fortune. For what else does she mean when she enjoins upon us (*c*) to withdraw our thought from the ills that hold us in thrall and divert it with foregone pleas-

[1] *Ce mesme chatouillement et esguisement.*

[2] See Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, III, 6.

[3] This insensibility to pain is bought at the great cost of inhumanity in the soul and torpor in the body. — *Ibid.*

ures; and (*a*) to make use, as consolation for our present ills, of the remembrance of past goods, and to call to our aid a vanished satisfaction, to oppose it to what presses upon us,[1] (*c*) *levationes ægritudinum in avocatione a cogitanda molestia et revocatione ad contemplandas voluptates ponit*,[2] (*a*) if it be not that, when her strength fails, she is ready to employ craft, and to resort to an agile twist of the leg when strength in the body and the arms has deserted her? For, not to a philosopher only, but to a merely sober-minded man, when he is actually suffering the thirst of a burning fever, what coin to pay him is the remembrance of the sweetness of Greek wine? (*b*) It would rather make his fortune worse; [3]

Che ricordarsi il ben doppia la noia.[4]

(*a*) Of the same sort is this other counsel that philosophy offers: to retain in the memory only past happiness, and to expel from it the troubles from which we have suffered; [5] as if we had in our power the art of forgetfulness. (*c*) And it counsels again what is of still less value:

Suavis est laborum præteritorum memoria.[6]

(*a*) How is it that philosophy, which should put arms in my hand to contend with fortune, which should strengthen my courage to trample under foot all human adversities, can have the weakness to make me sneak away by these cowardly and ridiculous by-ways? For the memory presents to us not what we choose, but what pleases it. Indeed, there is nothing that impresses a thing so vividly in our recollection as the desire to forget it; it is a good way of giving a thing in charge to our soul and imprinting it there, to solicit her to lose it. (*c*) And that saying is false: *Est situm in*

[1] This is the doctrine of Epicurus. See Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, III, 16, and *De Fin.*, II, 30 and 32.

[2] He places the lessening of anxieties in turning away from troubling thoughts and recalling pleasant ones to the mind. — Idem, *Tusc. Disp.*, III, 15.

[3] *Ce feroit plutost luy empirer son marché.*

[4] The remembrance of happiness doubles the grief. — A refashioning of the *Inferno*, IV, 121.

[5] This again is Epicurean doctrine. See Cicero, *De Fin.*, II, 32.

[6] Sweet is the memory of past labours. — Euripides (*Andromeda*), in Cicero, *De Fin.*, II, 32.

nobis, ut et adversa quasi perpetua oblivione obruamus et secunda jucunde et suaviter meminerimus.[1] And this is true: *Memini etiam quæ nolo, oblivisci non possum quæ volo.*[2] (*a*) And from whom comes this advice? From him (*c*) *qui se unus sapientem profiteri sit ausus,*[3] —

(*a*) Qui genus humanum ingenio superavit, et omnes
Præstrinxit, stellas exortus ut ætherius sol.[4]

To empty and unfurnish the memory — is not this the true and straight road to ignorance? (*c*) *Iners malorum remedium ignorantia est.*[5] (*a*) There are many similar precepts, which permit us to borrow from the common people trivial-seeming truths,[6] when keen and powerful reasoning can not avail, provided they afford us satisfaction and consolation. When they can not heal the wound, they are content to benumb it and cloak it. I think this will not be denied: that if to a condition of life which possesses enjoyment and tranquillity could be added continuance and stability through some weakness and malady of the judgement, this would be accepted: —

potare et spargere flores
Incipiam, patiarque vel inconsultus haberi.[7]

Many philosophers would be of Lycas's opinion: he, otherwise of well-ordered character, living pleasantly and peaceably with his family, failing in no function of his duty toward his dependants and strangers, guarding himself well from hurtful things, had a strange fancy impressed on his brain by some failure of reason: he thought that he was per-

[1] It is in our power to bury adversities in almost perpetual oblivion, and to remember prosperities joyfully and sweetly. — Cicero, *De Fin.*, I, 17.

[2] I remember even what I would not; I can not forget at will. — *Ibid.*, II, 32. Words attributed by Cicero to Themistocles.

[3] Who alone dared to declare himself a wise man. — *Ibid.*, II, 3 (Epicurus).

[4] Who in intellect surpassed the human race, and quenched all men as the ethereal sun quenches the stars. — Lucretius, III, 1043.

[5] Ignorance is but a weak remedy for ills. — Seneca, *Œdipus*, III, 7.

[6] *Apparences frivoles.*

[7] I will begin to drink and scatter flowers, and I will be content to pass for a very fool. — Horace, *Epistles*, I, 5.14.

petually in the theatre, seeing pastimes, spectacles, and the best plays in the world. Being cured by the doctors of this disturbing disorder [1] he almost went to law with them to reinstate him in the enjoyment of those fancies.[2]

> Pol! me occidistis, amici,
> Non servastis, ait, cui sic extorta voluptas
> Et demptus per vim mentis gratissimus error.[3]

A delusion similar to that of Thrasilaus, son of Pythodorus, who came to believe that all the ships that went out from and came into the port of Piræus were employed in his service alone; congratulating himself on the good fortune of their voyages, and joyfully welcoming them. His brother Crito having caused him to be restored to his better understanding, he regretted that state of being in which he had lived joyously and free from all trouble.[4] It is as this old Greek line says, there is much advantage in not being very wise: —

> Εν τῶ φρονεῖν γὰρ μηδὲν ἥδιστος βίος.[5]

And Ecclesiastes: "In much wisdom, much trouble; and he who increases knowledge, to him is increased travail and torment." [6]

Even that to which, in general, philosophy agrees, the last remedy that she ordains for all manner of necessities, which is to put an end to the life that we can no longer endure: (*c*) *Placet? pare. Non placet? quacunque vis, exi.*[7] *Pungit dolor? Vel fodiat sane. Si nudus es, da jugulum; sin tectus*

[1] *Cette humeur peccante.*

[2] In the *Adages* of Erasmus, the examples of Lycas and Thrasilaus, the Greek verse, and the quotations from *Ecclesiastes* are placed together under the heading, *Fortunata stultitia.*

[3] "By Pollux, my friends, you have killed me, not saved me," he said, "from whom pleasure has been thus snatched, and a delightful delusion forcibly destroyed." — Horace, *Epistles*, II, 2.138.

[4] See Athenæus, book XII.

[5] The sweetest life consists in taking heed of naught. — Sophocles, *Ajax*, 552.

[6] See *Ecclesiastes*, I, 18. Montaigne, of course, used the Vulgate.

[7] Does it please you? accept it. Does it not please you? depart from it as you will. — Seneca, *Epistle* 70. The original reads: *Placet? vive. Non placet? licet eo reverti unde venisti.*

armis Vulcaniis, id est fortitudine, resiste;[1] and that saying at the Greek banquets, which they there followed: *Aut bibat, aut abeat*[2] (which sounds more fittingly in the tongue of a Gascon, who freely changes the *b* to *v*, than in that of Cicero), —

(*a*) Vivere si recte nescis, decede peritis;
Lusisti satis, edisti satis atque bibisti;
Tempus abire tibi est, ne potum largius æquo
Rideat et pulset lasciva decentius ætas,[3] —

what else is it but a confession of her [4] powerlessness and a dismissal, not only to ignorance, there to be under cover, but to very senselessness, non-feeling and non-being?

Democritum postquam matura vetustas
Admonuit memorem motus languescere mentis,
Sponte sua leto caput obvius obtulit ipse.[5]

This falls in with what Antisthenes said, that provision should be made, either of sense to understand, or of a halter to hang oneself; and what Chrysippus brought forward on this subject from the poet Tyrtæus: To draw nigh virtue or death.[6] (*c*) And Crates said that love was cured by hunger, if not by time; and, for him whom these two means did not please, by a rope.[7] (*b*) That Sextius of whom Seneca and Plutarch speak with such commendation,[8] having flung him-

[1] Suffering stings you? or even tortures you? If you are unarmed, present your throat; but if you are protected by the arms of Vulcan, that is, by courage, stand firm. — Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, II, 14.

[2] Let him drink, or let him go away. — *Ibid.*, V, 41.

[3] If you know not how to live rightly, give place to those who do. You have played enough and eaten and drunk enough; it is time for you to depart, lest young men, in whom gaiety is more becoming, laugh at you when you have drunk too much, and drive you away. — Horace, *Epistles*, II, 2.213.

[4] That is, philosophy's.

[5] When Democritus was warned by his ripe old age that the memory-bringing motions of his mind were languishing, he spontaneously offered his head to death. — Lucretius, III, 1039.

[6] See Plutarch, *Common conceptions against the Stoics*.

[7] *Par la hart.* See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Crates*.

[8] See Plutarch, *Of progress in virtue;* Seneca, *Epistles* 59, 62, 64, 98, 108.

self into the study of philosophy, all other things laid aside, decided to cast himself into the sea, finding the progress of his studies too slow and too protracted. He sought death in default of knowledge. Here are the words of the law on this subject: If perchance some great misfortune occurs, which can not be remedied, the harbour is near; and safety can be had by swimming out of the body as out of a leaky skiff; for it is the fear of death, not the desire of life, that makes the fool cling to the body.

(*a*) As life is made more agreeable by simplicity, it is also by it made more innocent and better, as I a while ago began to say. The simple, says St. Paul, and the ignorant rise from the earth and possess themselves of heaven; and we, with all our learning, plunge into the bottomless pits of hell.[1] I care nothing, either for Valentian,[2] the declared enemy of learning and letters, or for Licinius, — Roman emperors both, — who called them the poison and pest of every political state; or for Mahomet, who, (*c*) as I have heard, (*a*) forbade learning to his followers; but the example of the great Lycurgus and his authority should certainly have great weight; and veneration for that divine Lacedæmonian government, so great, so admirable, and flourishing for so long a time virtuous and fortunate, without any teaching or practice of letters. They who return from that new world which was discovered by the Spaniards in the time of our fathers can testify to us in how much more strict and more regular a way those nations live, without government and without laws, than our nations do, where there are more officials and more laws than there are other men and lawsuits.

Di cittatorie piene e di libelli,
D'esamine e di carte, di procure,
Hanno le mani e il seno, e gran fastelli
Di chiose, di consigli e di letture:
Per cui le faculta de poverelli
Non sono mai ne le citta sicure;

[1] There is no such passage in the New Testament. See C. Agrippa, *Of the uncertainty and vanity of learning.*

[2] Valentinianus. There was no Emperor Valentianus. The mistake is Agrippa's. See *Ibid.*

Hanno dietro e dinanzi, e d'ambi ilati,
Notai, procuratori e advocati.[1]

It is, as was said by a Roman senator in the later period, that the breath of their predecessors stank of garlic, and their breasts were sweetened by a good conscience; [2] and that, on the contrary, those of his time smelt outwardly only of perfume, stinking within from all sorts of vices; which means, I think, that they had much learning and ability and a great lack of high character.[3] Rusticity, ignorance, simplicity, roughness, are willing companions of innocence; curiosity, cunning, learning, bring evil-mindedness in their train; humility, fear, obedience, kindliness (which are the chief instruments for the preservation of human society) demand a soul untroubled, docile, and thinking little of itself.

Christians have a peculiar knowledge to what extent curiosity is an evil innate and original in man. The desire to increase in wisdom and in knowledge was the first ruin of the human race; it was the way by which it cast itself into eternal damnation. Pride is its destruction and its corruption; it is pride that turns man aside from the common roads, that leads him to embrace novelties and to prefer to be the head of a band wandering and astray in the path of perdition, to prefer to be a master [4] and teacher of error and falsehood, rather than to be a disciple in the school of truth, allowing himself to be led and guided by another's hand into the beaten and straight road. This is, perhaps, what the ancient Greek sentence means, that superstition follows pride and obeys it as if it were its father: *ἡ δεισιδαιμονία κατάπερ πατρὶ τῷ τυφῷ πείτεται.*[5]

[1] Their hands and their laps are full of writs and libels and documents and procurations, and great heaps of glosses, consultations, and lectures; thanks to them, the poor people in the cities are never safe; they have before and behind them and on either side notaries, attorneys, and advocates. — Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, XIV, 84.

[2] Says M. Villey: "Cette allégation est peut-être une deformation d'un mot de Varron qui a été rapporté par Nonius au mot *cepe*. Je n'ai pas retrouvé la source de Montaigne."

[3] *Preud'hommie.*

[4] *Regent.*

[5] Superstition obeys conceit as its father. — Stobæus, *Sermon* 22; attributed to Socrates.

(*c*) O presumption! how thou dost hinder us! When Socrates was informed that the God of Wisdom had attributed to him the title of Sage, he was astonished at this; and searching and examining himself throughout, he found nowhere any ground for this divine judgement. He knew men as just, temperate, brave, and learned as himself, and more eloquent and more handsome and more useful to the country. At last he determined that he was distinguished from others, and was wise, only because he did not so consider himself; and that his God considered as peculiar stupidity in man his belief in his own learning and wisdom; and that his best learning was the knowledge of his ignorance, and simple-mindedness his best wisdom.[1] (*a*) Holy writ declares those of us who think highly of themselves to be poor creatures: "Dust and ashes," it says to them, "what hast thou to pride thyself upon?" [2] And again: "God made man like a shadow, of which who shall judge when, by the departure of the light, it shall have vanished?" [3] It is naught but ourselves.[4] Our powers are so far from conceiving the divine height that, of the works of our creator, those best bear his stamp, and are most his, which we understand least. For Christians, to encounter an incredible thing is an opportunity to believe. The thing is so much the more according to reason as it is opposed to human reason. (*b*) If it were according to reason, it would no longer be miraculous; and if it were in accordance with some precedent, it would no longer be a singular thing. (*c*) *Melius scitur Deus nesciendo*, says St. Augustine; [5] and Tacitus: *Sanctius est ac reverentius de actis deorum credere quam scire*.[6] And Plato thinks that

[1] See Plato, *Apology*.

[2] See *Ecclesiasticus*, X, 9. The Latin is *Quid superbit terra et cinis?* By changing the third person of the verb to the second, Montaigne achieves an admirable rhetorical effect. The sentence was one of those written on the beams of his library.

[3] This sentence, too, was written in Latin on the beams of the library, and credited to "Eccl. VII." But it is not to be found in *Ecclesiastes*, and M. Villey suggests that it was written by Montaigne himself, or that he borrowed it from some author who deceived him as to its origin.

[4] *Ce n'est rien à la verité que de nous.*

[5] God is best known by being unknown. — *De Ordine*, II, 16.

[6] There is more sanctity and reverence in believing the deeds of the gods than in knowing them. — *Germania*, XXXIV.

there is some sin of impiety in enquiring too closely both about God and about the world, and about the first causes of things.[1] *Atque illum quidem parentem hujus universitatis invenire difficile; et, quum jam inveneris, indicare in vulgus, nefas*, says Cicero.[2]

(*a*) We speak of power, virtue, justice; these are words that betoken some great thing; but that thing we in no wise see, nor do we conceive it. We say that God fears, that God is wroth, that God loves, —

Immortalia mortali sermone notantes;[3]

these are all passions and emotions which can not dwell in God in the same form as in us; nor can we imagine the form in him. It is for God alone to know himself and to interpret his works. (*c*) And he does so in our language unfittingly, in order to lower himself[4] and descend to us, who are prostrate on the ground. How can discretion, which is the choice between good and evil, belong to him, since no evil touches him? How, likewise, reasoning and intelligence, which we employ to arrive, by way of things hard to understand, at what appears as truth,[5] since there is nothing hard for God to understand? Justice, which allots to each one what belongs to him, being created for the fellowship and community of men — how can it exist in God? And how temperance, which is the restraining of bodily pleasures that have no place in divinity? Fortitude in bearing pain, labour, dangers, pertain as little to him; these three things have no access to him.[6] Wherefore, Aristotle holds him to be equally exempt from virtue and from vice.[7] *Neque gratia, neque ira teneri potest, quod quæ talia essent, imbecilla essent omnia.*[8]

[1] See *Laws*, book VII.

[2] But it is, in truth, a difficult thing to discover the creator of this universe; and when discovered, it is sacrilege to proclaim him to the common people. — Cicero, translation of Plato, *Timæus*, II.

[3] Expressing immortal things in mortal speech. — Lucretius, V, 121.

[4] *Pour s'avaler.*

[5] *Arriver aus apparantes.*

[6] See Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, III, 15.

[7] See *Nicomachæan Ethics*, VII, 1.1.

[8] He is subject neither to love nor to hate, for these are the traits of weak beings. — Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, I, 17. (Part of a quotation from Epicurus.)

(*a*) The participation that we have in knowledge of the truth, such as it is, it is not by our own powers that we have acquired it. God has taught us that plainly enough by the simple and ignorant witnesses he has chosen from the common people, who instruct us concerning his wonderful secrets; our faith is not our own acquisition; it is a pure gift from the liberality of another. It is not from reasoning or from our intelligence that we have received our religion, but from authority and external command. The weakness of our judgement aids us in it more than the strength, and our blindness more than our clear-sightedness. It is by means of our ignorance more than of our knowledge that we are learned in divine learning. It is no wonder if our natural and earthly powers can not conceive this supernatural and heavenly knowledge; we bring to it naught of our own save obedience and submission; for, as it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and will cast down the learning of the learned. Where is the wise man? Where is the teacher? [1] Where is the reasoner according to the time? Has not God rendered foolish the wisdom of this world? For since the world has not by wisdom known God, it has pleased him, by unreasonable predication,[2] to save believers."

I must also inquire at last whether it is in the power of man to find what he seeks, and whether the quest that he has been engaged in for so many ages has enriched him with some new power and some solid truth. I believe that he will confess, if he speaks honestly, that all the acquisition he has obtained from so long a search is the having learned to recognise his weakness. The ignorance that was in us by nature we have, by long study, avouched and averred. The same thing happens with men really learned that is seen in ears of corn: they grow higher and higher, with heads proudly erect, so long as they are empty; but when they are full and big with grain in their maturity, they begin to humble themselves and to lower their crest.[3] These men who have tested and sounded every thing, having found in that mass of

[1] That is, the scribe.

[2] *Par la vanité de la predication.* See *I Corinthians*, I, 19–21.

[3] See Plutarch, *Of the progress of virtue.*

knowledge, and accumulation of so many different things, nothing solid and stable, have renounced their presumption and recognised their natural condition.

(*c*) It is this with which Velleius twits Cotta and Cicero, that they learned from Philo that they had learned nothing.[1] Pherecides, one of the seven sages, writing to Thales on his death-bed, "I have," he said, "ordered my friends, when they have buried me, to carry my writings to you; if they please you and the other sages, publish them; if not, suppress them; they contain no certain knowledge which satisfies me. And I do not profess to know the truth or to attain to it. I uncover things more than I discover them." [2] (*a*) The wisest man that ever lived,[3] when he was asked what he knew, replied that he knew this thing, that he knew nothing. He verified what is said, that the greatest part of the things we know is the smallest part of those of which we are ignorant; which is to say, that the very thing that we think we know is a piece, and a very small piece, of our ignorance.[4] (*c*) We know things as in a dream, Plato says, and in truth are ignorant of them.[5] *Omnes pene veteres nihil cognosci, nihil percipi, nihil sciri posse dixerunt; angustos sensus, imbecillos animos, brevia curricula vitæ.*[6] (*a*) Cicero himself, who owed to learning all he was worth, Valerius says, as he grew old, began to neglect letters.[7] (*c*) And, while he had made use of them, it was without being bound to any party, following what seemed to him probable, sometimes in one school, sometimes in another; remaining always within the uncertainty of the Academy. *Dicendum est,*

[1] See Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, I, 17.

[2] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Pherecides.*

[3] Socrates. In 1580 to 1588: (*et qui n'eust autre plus juste occasion d'estre appellé sage que cette sienne sentence*).

[4] See Cicero, *Academica*, I, 4; Plato, *Apology*, etc.

[5] See the *Politicus.*

[6] Almost all the ancients said that there is nothing to be learned, nothing to be comprehended, nothing to be known; limited are the senses, weak is the mind, short is the course of life. — Cicero, *Academica*, I, 12.

[7] Montaigne took this from Cornelius Agrippa (*Of the uncertainty and vanity of learning*), who mistakenly refers to Valerius Maximus, where nothing of the sort is to be found.

sed ita ut nihil affirmem, quæram omnia, dubitans plerumque et mihi diffidens.[1]

(*a*) I should have too easy a task if I chose to consider man in his ordinary guise and in gross; and yet I might do so by his own rule, which judges the truth, not by the weight of the voices, but by their number. Let us set aside the common people, —

Qui vigilans stertit . . .
Mortua cui vita est prope jam vivo atque videnti,[2] —

who are not conscious of themselves, who do not judge themselves, who let most of their natural faculties lie idle. I would take man in his highest state. Let us consider him in that small number of superior and chosen men who, being endowed with an excellent and exceptional native force, have still strengthened and sharpened human nature by diligence, by study, and by art, and have raised it to the highest point of wisdom that it can attain. They have moulded their minds in every way and on all sides, have supported and propped them with all fitting external aid, and have enriched and adorned them with all that could be borrowed for their benefit, within and without the world; it is in these men that is found the supreme height of human nature. They have ruled the world through governments and laws; they have instructed it by arts and sciences, and still instruct it by the example of their admirable characters.[3] I will take into account only these men, their testimony and their experience. Let us see how far they have gone, and to what they have held fast.[4] The maladies and defects that we find in that company [5] the world may boldly acknowledge to be its own. Whoever is in search of a thing comes to this point, when he says, either that he has found it, or that it can not be found, or that he is still in quest of it. All philosophy is divided into these three kinds. Its purpose

[1] I speak, but without affirming any thing; I shall be in doubt about many things, and I shall distrust even myself. — Cicero, *De Div.*, II, 3.

[2] Who snore, though awake . . . for whom, living and seeing, life is almost death. — Lucretius, III, 1048, 1046.

[3] *Meurs* (*mœurs*).

[4] *Ils se sont tenus.* In 1580 to 1588, *ils se sont resolus.*

[5] *Collège.*

is to seek truth, knowledge, and certainty. The Peripatetics, Epicureans, Stoics, and others thought that they had found them. These philosophers set forth the branches of knowledge that we have and discussed them as things certainly known. Clitomachus, Carneades, and the Academics despaired in their search, and concluded that truth could not be apprehended by our faculties. They arrived at weakness [1] and human ignorance. This sect has had the greatest following and the most eminent disciples.[2] Pyrrho and other Sceptics, or Epichists, — (*c*) whose tenets, many of the ancients thought, were derived from Homer, from the seven sages, from Archilochus, and from Euripides, and connect therewith Zeno, Democritus, and Xenophanes, — (*a*) say that they are still in quest of truth.[3] These last consider that those who think that they have found it infinitely deceive themselves, and that there is also too bold a vanity in that second kind, which asserts that human faculties are not capable of attaining it. For to do this, to fix the limit of an ability to know and to estimate the perplexity of things, is a great and extreme knowledge, of which they doubt that man is capable.

Nil sciri quisquis putat, id quoque nescit
An sciri possit quo se nil scire fatetur.[4]

The ignorance that knows itself, that judges itself and condemns itself, is not a complete ignorance; to be that, it must needs be ignorant of itself. So thinking, the doctrine of the Pyrrhonians is to waver, to doubt, and to enquire, to be assured of nothing, to answer for nothing. Of the three functions of the mind, the imaginative, the appetitive, and the acceptant,[5] they admit the first two; the last they declare and maintain to be ambiguous, without inclination toward, or approval of, one side or the other, however slight.

(*c*) Zeno represented by gesture his idea of this division of the faculties of the mind: the hand spread out and open

[1] *La fin de ceux-cy, c'est la foiblesse.*

[2] See Sextus Empiricus, *Hypotyposes*, I, 1.1.

[3] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Pyrrho.*

[4] If any man thinks that nothing is known, he knows not whether even this can be known, that he knows nothing. — Lucretius, IV, 469.

[5] *La consentante.*

meant what is seen;[1] the hand half closed and the fingers slightly bent, assent; the fist clinched, comprehension; when, with the left hand he closed the fist tighter, knowledge.[2] (*a*) Now this attitude of their judgement, constant[3] and inflexible, accepting all objects without inclination and consent, leads them to their Ataraxy,[4] which is a placid, settled condition of life, exempt from the emotions that we experience by the impress of the idea and knowledge of things that we think we possess. Whence are born fear, avarice, envy, immoderate desires, ambition, pride, superstition, love of novelty, rebellion, disobedience, obstinacy, and the greater number of bodily ills. They are even exempted thereby from zeal about their doctrine. For they contend in a very mild fashion. They do not fear opposition[5] in their discussions. When they say that what is heavy goes downward, they would be very sorry to be believed about this, but seek to be contradicted, in order to give rise to doubt and suspense of judgement, which is their end. They put forward their propositions only to combat those that they think we believe in. If you adopt theirs, they will as readily adopt the opposite to uphold: it is all one to them; they have no choice about it. If you prove that snow is black, they argue, on the contrary, that it is white.[6] If you say that it is neither one nor the other, they are bound to maintain that it is both. If, as a certainty,[7] you declare that you know nothing about it, they will maintain that you do know. Yes, and if, by an affirmative axiom, you assert that you doubt about it, they will contend with you that you do not doubt about it, or that you can not judge and make sure that you doubt. And by this extreme degree of doubt, which undermines itself, they are separated and divided from many doctrines, even from those which have maintained, in many forms, doubt and ignorance. (*b*) Why, they say, should they not be allowed to doubt, as among the

[1] *C'estoit apparence.* Cicero's word is *visum.*
[2] See Cicero, *Academica*, IV, 47.
[3] *Droicte.*
[4] See Sextus Empiricus, *Hypot.*, I, 12.
[5] *La revenche.*
[6] See *Ibid.*, I, 13.
[7] *Par certain jugement.*

Dogmatists one is allowed to say green, another yellow? Is there any thing that can be put before you to admit or deny, which it is not lawful to regard as ambiguous? And while others are carried away, as by a great wind, either by the custom of their country, or by the teaching of their parents, or by chance, without reflection and without choice, oftenest indeed before the age of discretion, to this or that doctrine, to the Stoic or Epicurean sect, to which they find themselves pledged, enslaved, and fast joined as something seized upon which they can not let go their hold of, — (*c*) *ad quamcunque disciplinam velut tempestate delati, ad eam tanquam ad saxum adhærescunt*,[1] — (*b*) why should it not be likewise granted to these to maintain their liberty, and to consider matters without being bound and subjected? (*c*) *hoc liberiores et solutiores quod integra illis est judicandi potestas*.[2]

Is there not some advantage in being disengaged from the necessity which bridles others? (*b*) Is it not better to remain in suspense than to be entangled in the many errors that the human imagination has engendered? Is it not better to suspend our conviction than to be mixed up with these seditious and quarrelsome factions? (*c*) What shall I choose? Whatever you please, so long as you do choose.[3] What a foolish reply, to which it seems, however, comes at last all dogmatism which does not permit us to be ignorant of that of which we are ignorant. (*b*) Join the party of highest repute: it will never be so secure that, to defend it, you will not need to attack and combat hundreds and hundreds of opposing parties. Is it not better to hold aloof from such a mêlée? You are permitted to embrace, as it were, your honour and your life, Aristotle's belief concerning the eternity of the soul, and to contradict Plato and give him the lie thereupon; and to themselves shall it be forbidden to doubt about it? (*c*) If it be permissible for Panætius to uphold his private judgement concerning haruspices, dreams,

[1] Whatever philosophical system they are thrown on, as by a storm, they cling to it as to a rock. — Cicero, *Academica*, II, 3.

[2] All the more free and independent because they have complete liberty of judgement. — *Ibid.*

[3] See *Ibid.*, 43.

oracles, vaticinations, about which things the Stoics have no doubt,[1] why shall not a wise man dare in all things what this man dares in those things which he has been taught by his masters, and which are confirmed by the common consent of the school of which he is a disciple and teacher? (*b*) If it be a child who judges, he understands not what it is; if it be a scholar, he is prepossessed. They have kept for themselves a wonderful advantage in the combat, being disburdened of all care of self-defence.[2] It matters not to them that they are struck, so long as they strike; and they make their profit of every thing. If they win, your proposition is lame; if you win, theirs is. If they fail, they verify ignorance; if you fail, you verify it. If they prove that nothing is known, that is well; if they can not prove it, it is well all the same. (*c*) *Ut, quum in eadem re paria contrariis in partibus momenta inveniuntur, facilius ab utraque parte assertio sustineatur.*[3] And they profess to see much more easily that a thing is false, than that it is true; [4] and that which is not, than that which is; and that which they do not believe, than that which they do believe.

(*a*) They thus express themselves: "I assert nothing; it is no more thus than thus, or than neither the one nor the other; I do not understand it; the probabilities are equal throughout.[5] It is equally permissible to speak for and against.[6] (*c*) Nothing seems true which may not seem false." (*a*) Their symbolic word is ἐπέχω [7] — that is to say, I hold on, I do not budge. Such expressions constantly

[1] See Cicero, *Academica*, II, 33. Panætius did not give his assent to the general belief of his (the Stoic) sect.

[2] *De se couvrir.*

[3] And when on the same subject arguments of equal weight are found on opposing sides, it is more easy to suspend judgement on either side. — Cicero, *Academica*, I, 12.

[4] *Pour quoi une chose soit fauce, que non pas qu'elle soit vraie.*

[5] See Sextus Empiricus, *Hypot.*, I, 22; 19; 23. "Most of the Sceptic aphorisms were written in Greek on the beams of Montaigne's library." — M. Villey.

[6] Cf. the opening words of Book I, chap. 47: *C'est bien ce que dict ce vers:* Ἐπέων δε πολὺς νόμος ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα. (*Iliad*, XX, 249.) "*Il y a prou loy de parler par tout, et pour et contre.*" This sentence was among those on the beams of the library.

[7] Another remark of Sextus, which was carved on the library beams.

recur with them,[1] and others of like substance. Their result is a pure, complete, and very perfect delay and suspension of judgement. They employ their reason to question and discuss, not to decide and choose. Whoever can imagine a perpetual confession of ignorance, a judgement without tendency or inclination on any occasion whatever, he will have an idea of Pyrrhonism. I describe this humour as fully as I can, because many find it difficult to conceive; and its very authors present it somewhat obscurely and diversely.

Concerning the actions of life, they are therein of the common fashion. They yield and adapt themselves to natural inclinations, to the impulsion and restraint of passions, to the decrees of laws and customs, and to the teaching of the arts.[2] (*c*) *Non enim nos Deus ista scire, sed tantummodo uti voluit.*[3] (*a*) They allow their ordinary actions to be guided by these things, without any use of opinion or judgement. Which makes me unable to harmonise easily this conception with what is said of Pyrrho.[4] They depict him as dull and emotionless, choosing an untamed and unsociable course of life, standing in the way of being hit by carts, venturing near precipices, refusing to comply with the laws. This is going beyond his teaching. He did not desire to be a stone or a stump; he desired to be a living, investigating, and reasoning man, enjoying all natural pleasures and advantages, employing and making use of all his bodily and mental faculties in regular and right fashion. The fantastic, imaginary, and false privileges which man has usurped, to rule, to regulate, to establish the truth, he in good faith renounced and forsook.

(*c*) [5] But there is no sect which is not constrained to permit a wise man belonging to it to follow many things neither understood, nor recognised, nor agreed to, if he would live. And when he goes on shipboard, he follows his purpose, not

[1] *Voyla leurs refreins.*

[2] See Sextus Empiricus, *Hypot.*, I, 11.

[3] For God chooses that we should not know these things, but merely make use of them. — Cicero, *De Div.*, I, 18.

[4] In 1580 to 1588: *ce que* [Diogenes] *Laertius dict de la vie de Pyrrho, et à quoy Lucianus, Aulus Gellius, et autres semblent s'encliner.*

[5] This whole passage, down to "touchstone" (p. 271, line 18), is a translation of portions of Cicero, *Academica*, II, 31, 33, and 34.

knowing if it will be profitable to him, and trusts that [1] the vessel is sound, the pilot experienced, the weather suitable — conditions that are probable only; in accordance with which he is bound to let himself be moved by outward appearances, provided that they are not of a manifestly thwarting character.[2] He has a body, he has a soul; his senses impel him, his mind stirs him. Although he does not find in himself the special and peculiar indication for judgement, and although he may discern that he should not pledge his assent, since there may be something false resembling what is true, he does not fail to perform the functions of his life completely and fitly. How many arts are there which avowedly have their being in conjecture rather than in knowledge; which do not decide as to the true and the false, and follow solely after what seems? There is, they say, both what is true and what is false; and there is in us the ability to seek them, but not the ability to determine them by a touchstone. We do much better to let ourselves be guided by the fashion of the world, without inquisition. A soul warranted against prepossession has made marvellous progress toward tranquillity. People who judge their judges and spy faults in them never duly submit to them. How much more docile and easily led, in respect both to the laws of religion and to the laws of civil government, simple and incurious minds are found to be, than the vigilant and pedagogic minds, regarding divine and human causes.

(*a*) There is nothing of human surmise in which there is so much verisimilitude and utility. This [3] offers man to view, naked and empty, acknowledging his inborn feebleness, fit to receive from on high some degree of foreign force, unfurnished with human knowledge, and so much the better adapted to receive within himself divine knowledge, nullifying his judgement to make more room for faith, neither an unbeliever, nor asserting any dogma contrary to the common observances, humble, obedient, teachable, studious, a sworn foe of heresy, and consequently exempting

[1] *Et se plie à ce que.*

[2] *D'expresse contrariete.*

[3] That is, the Pyrrhonian philosophy (taking up the thread broken by the addition of the *Édition Municipale*).

himself from the idle and irreligious opinions introduced by false sects. (*b*) He is a blank page, prepared to take from God's hand such manifestations [1] as it shall please him to write upon it. The more we remand ourselves to God and entrust ourselves to him, and renounce ourselves, the better it is for us. (*a*) Accept things, says Ecclesiastes, in good part, with the aspect and the nature with which they appear to thee from day to day; the rest is beyond your knowledge.[2] (*c*) *Dominus novit cogititationes hominum, quoniam vanæ sunt.*[3]

(*a*) Here we behold how, of the three general schools of Philosophy, two make express profession of doubt and ignorance; and in that of the Dogmatists, which is the third, it is easy to discern that the greater number assume the semblance of assurance only to make a better appearance. They thought not so much of establishing some certainty for us as of showing us how far they had gone in this hunting for truth: (*c*) *quam docti fingunt, magis quam norunt.*[4]

Timæus, having to inform Socrates of what he knows of the gods, of the world, and of men, proposes to speak of them as man to man, and [says] that it suffices if his reasonings are as probable as the reasonings of another; for not in his hand nor in any mortal hand are accurate reasonings.[5] Which one of his followers has imitated thus: *Ut potero, explicabo; nec tamen, ut Pythius Apollo, certa ut sint et fixa, quæ dixero; sed, ut homunculus, probabilia conjectura sequens;* [6] and this on the topic of contempt for death, a simple and everyday topic.[7] Elsewhere he has translated the same thought from Plato: *Si forte, de deorum natura ortuque mundi disserentes, minus id quod habemus animo consequimur, haud erit mirum. Æquum est enim meminisse*

[1] *Telles formes.* [2] There is no such sentence in *Ecclesiastes.*

[3] The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity. — *Psalm* XCIV, 11.

[4] Which the learned imagine, rather than know. — Source not known.

[5] See Plato, *Timæus.*

[6] I will explain these things as I can; not, however, will my words be certain and immutable, like those of Pythian Apollo, but those of a weak man, probabilities following conjectures. — Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, I, 9.

[7] *Discours naturel et populere.*

et me qui disseram, hominem esse, et vos qui judicetis; ut, si probabilia dicentur, nihil ultra requiratis.[1]

(*a*) Aristotle ordinarily heaps up before us a great number of other opinions and other beliefs, to compare them with his own, and makes us see how much further he has gone, and how much nearer he approaches probability; for the truth is not determined by authority and by the testimony of others. (*c*) And therefore Epicurus scrupulously avoided alleging his opinion of other men in his writings. (*a*) He [2] is the prince of Dogmatists; and yet we learn from him that the much knowing gives cause for the more doubting.[3] We frequently see him of set purpose [4] shroud himself in obscurity so dense and impenetrable that one can detect therein nothing of his opinion. It is in fact a form of Pyrrhonism under a form of decision.[5] (*c*) Listen to the declaration of Cicero, who explains to us by his own conception that of others: *Qui requirunt quid de quaque re ipsi sentiamus, curiosius id faciunt quam necesse est. Hæc in philosophia ratio contra omnia disserendi nullamque rem aperte judicandi, profecta a Socrate, repetita ab Arcesila, confirmata a Carneade, usque ad nostram viget ætatem. Hi sumus qui omnibus veris falsa quædam adjuncta esse dicamus, tanta similitudine ut in iis nulla insit certe judicandi et assentiendi nota.*[6]

[1] If, perchance, in discussing the nature of the gods and the origin of the universe, I fall short of the end I have in mind, it will not be surprising; for it must be remembered that both I who discourse and you who judge are men; so that, if I set forth what is probable, nothing more should be required. — Cicero, in his translation of Plato, *Timæus*, III.

[2] Aristotle. [3] See Plutarch, *Table-Talk*.

[4] In 1580 to 1588: (*comme pour exemple sur le propos de l'immortalité de l'ame*).

[5] *C'est par effect un Pyrrhonisme soubs une forme resolutive.* In 1580 to 1588: *Pyrrhonisme qu'il represente soubs la forme de parler qu'il a entreprise.*

[6] Those who seek to know what I think about each subject are more inquisitive than is worth while. This dialectic method in philosophy of dissertation about all things, pronouncing clearly on nothing, that was originated by Socrates, renewed by Arcesilaus, strengthened by Carneades, flourishes to our day. . . . I am of those who declare that joined with all truth there is some falseness so much resembling it, that there is no certain quality for assent or dissent. — Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, I, 5.

(*b*) Why is it that not Aristotle alone, but most philosophers sought incomprehensibility,[1] unless it were to profit by the emptiness of the subject, and to employ the curiosity of our minds, giving it something to feed upon — that hollow and fleshless bone to gnaw? (*c*) Clitomachus declared that he had never been able to understand from the writings of Carneades what his opinions were.[2] (*b*) Wherefore Epicurus avoided clearness for his disciples,[3] and Heraclitus was for this called σκοτεινὸς.[4] Lack of clearness is a coin (*c*) which learned men use, like jugglers, in order not to lay open the emptiness of their art, and (*b*) which human stupidity readily accepts.

> Clarus ob obscuram linguam magis inter inanes,
> Omnia enim stolidi magis admirantur amantque
> Inversis quæ sub verbis latitantia cernunt.[5]

(*c*) Cicero reprehends some of his friends for being wont to spend more time on astrology, law, dialectics, and geometry than those sciences deserve; and says that this diverted them from more useful and worthy duties of life.[6] The Cyrenaic philosophers equally despised physics and dialectics.[7] Zeno, at the very beginning of his work on the Republic, declared all liberal branches of learning useless.[8] (*a*) Chrysippus said that what Plato and Aristotle had written concerning Logic, they wrote by way of pastime and for practice, and could not believe that they would have spoken seriously of so unimportant a subject.[9] (*c*) Plutarch said the same of metaphysics.[10] (*a*) Epicurus had

[1] In 1588: *pour en voiler leurs opinions.*

[2] See Cicero, *Academica*, II, 45.

[3] In 1588: *Pourquoi a crainct Epicurus qu'on l'entendit.*

[4] Obscure. See Cicero, *De Fin.*, II, 5.

[5] Celebrated chiefly among the frivolous for the obscurity of his language; for fools the more admire and like all things which they perceive to be concealed under involved language. — Lucretius, I, 639, 641, 642. Lucretius is talking about Heraclitus.

[6] See Cicero, *De Off.*, I, 6.

[7] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Aristippus.*

[8] See Idem, *Life of Zeno.*

[9] Possibly an erroneous reminiscence of a passage in Plutarch, *Contradictions of the Stoic philosophers.*

[10] See Plutarch, *Life of Alexander.*

said this also of rhetoric and grammar, (*c*) poetry, mathematics, and all the other sciences, except natural philosophy. (*a*) And Socrates of all save only that which treats of morals and of life.[1] (*c*) On whatsoever subject he was questioned, he always, first of all, induced the questioner to give an account of the conditions of his life, present and past, which he examined and judged, deeming all other instruction dependent on that, and supererogatory.[2]

Parum mihi placeant eæ litteræ quæ ad virtutem doctoribus nihil profuerunt.[3] (*a*) Most of the arts have been thus despised by learning itself. But they [4] did not think it inopportune to exercise and recreate their wits, even in matters in which there was no profitable solidity. For the rest, some have thought Plato a Dogmatist, others a doubter, others, on certain subjects the former, and on certain subjects the latter.[5] (*c*) The leader of his dialogues, Socrates, is always demanding and stirring up discussion, never stopping it, never giving satisfaction, and says that he has no other knowledge than knowing how to take the opposite side. Homer, their fountain-head,[6] has fixed on equal foundations all the schools of philosophy, in order to show how little it matters which way we go.[7] In Plato, ten different sects had their origin, it is said.[8] And in my opinion never was instruction wavering and unasseverating, if his be not so. Socrates said that midwives,[9] by taking up the business of helping others to bring forth, forsook the business of themselves bringing forth; that he, by the title of wise man,[10] which the

[1] The form of this passage, from "Chrysippus," p. 274, was somewhat different in 1580 to 1588.

[2] *Estimant toute autre aprantissage subsecutif à celuyla et supernumerere.*

[3] Those studies please me little that have not served to make virtuous those who teach them. — Sallust, *Jugurtha*, LXXXV, 32. The text of Sallust differs from Montaigne's version, which he took from the *Politics* of Justus Lipsius. Marius is speaking of the Greek language.

[4] That is, the philosophers.

[5] See Sextus Empiricus, *Hypot.*, I, 33.

[6] *Leur autheur.*

[7] See Seneca, *Epistle* 88.

[8] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Plato*, at the end.

[9] *Sages femmes.*

[10] *Sage homme.* The play upon words is Montaigne's, not Plato's.

gods had conferred upon him, had, in like manner, in his manly devotion, wholly of the mind,[1] rid himself of the power of begetting, contenting himself with aiding and befriending with his assistance those who brought forth, *ouvrir leur nature, gresser les conduits*, facilitating the issue of their infant, passing judgement upon it, baptizing it, feeding it, strengthening it, swaddling it, and ordering its movements; employing and using his understanding about the perils and fortunes of others.[2]

(*a*) It is thus for the most part with the authors of this third category,[3] (*b*) as the ancients have observed of the writings of Anaxagoras, Democritus, Parmenides, Zenophanes, and others.[4] (*a*) They have a manner of writing which is uncertain both in substance and in purpose, rather enquiring [5] than instructing, although they intersperse in their style dogmatic phrases. Is not this also seen (*c*) in Seneca and (*a*) in Plutarch? (*c*) How often is it evident, to those who scrutinise them closely, that they speak now of one aspect, now of another! And those who would bring jurists into agreement should first of all bring each one into agreement with himself.

Plato seems to me to have liked the method of philosophising by dialogues, because of placing more fitly in divers mouths the diversity and variation of his own ideas. To treat matters diversely is as well as to treat them in the same fashion, and better: that is to say, more copiously and usefully. Let us take example from ourselves. Judicial decrees are the highest point of dogmatic and decisive speech; yet those which our parliaments offer to the people, the most exemplary, suited to nourish in them the reverence they owe to that dignity, chiefly from the ability of the persons who exercise it, derive their excellence, not so much from the concluding words, which are usual with them and which are the same with every judge, as from the discussion of the various and contrary ratiocinations which the

[1] *En son amour virile et mentale.*

[2] See Plato, *Theætetus*.

[3] That is, the Dogmatists.

[4] See Cicero, *Academica*, II, 5.

[5] *Douteuse en substance et un dessein enquirant plustost.* These first few lines are slightly different in form in 1580 to 1588.

legal case permits. And the widest field for the mutual recriminations of the philosophers is derived from the contradictions and divergent views with which each one of them is encumbered, either purposely, to show the vacillation of the human mind about every subject, or compelled ignorantly by the volubility and incomprehensibility of every subject.

(*a*) What means this recurrent thought: "In a slippery and unstable place let us suspend our belief"? For, as Euripides says, —

> Les œuvres de dieu en diverses
> Façons nous donnent des traverses,[1] —

(*b*) like that thought which Empedocles strewed freely through his writings, as if moved by a divine frenzy and compelled by truth:[2] "No, no, we feel nothing, we see nothing; all things are hid from us; there is not one, of which we can prove what it is";[3] (*c*) in agreement with this divine saying: *Cogitationes mortalium timidæ, et incertæ adinventiones nostræ et providentiæ.*[4] (*a*) It is not to be thought strange if men, despairing of capturing, have not ceased to take pleasure in the chasing; study being in itself an agreeable occupation — so agreeable that, among other pleasures, the Stoics forbid that which comes from exercising the mind, desire to curb it, (*c*) and find immoderation in too much knowledge.[5]

(*a*) Democritus, having eaten at his table figs that tasted of honey, began at once to consider whence came this unusual sweetness in them; and, to enlighten himself concerning it, he was about to leave the table to see the situation of the place where these figs had been picked. His maidservant, having learned the cause of this movement, laughing, told him that he need think no more about that, for it was because she had put them in a dish in which there had been

[1] See Plutarch, *Of oracles which have ceased to speak;* Amyot's translation.

[2] In 1588: *Car, au bout de ses discours, il venoit s'escrier.*

[3] See Cicero, *Academica,* II, 5.

[4] For the thoughts of mortals are timid, and their devices and counsels are uncertain. — *Wisdom of Solomon,* IX, 14.

[5] See Seneca, *Epistle* 88.

honey. He was annoyed that she had deprived him of the occasion for this investigation, and had robbed his curiosity of an object. "Look you," he said to her, "you have done me an ill turn. I shall not for that stop searching out the cause of this, as if it were a natural one." [1] (*c*) And he would not have failed to find easily some true reason for a false and suppositious effect. (*a*) This anecdote of a great and famous philosopher puts before us very plainly that passion for study which keeps us engaged in the pursuit of things of whose acquisition we despair. Plutarch narrates a similar instance of some one who did not wish to be enlightened concerning that of which he was in doubt, in order not to lose the pleasure of seeking it; like that other who did not wish his physician to relieve him of feverish thirst, in order not to lose the pleasure of assuaging it by drinking. (*c*) *Satius est supervacua discere quam nihil.*[2] Just as, when we eat,[3] it is oftentimes only for pleasure, and not all that we take that gives us pleasure is nutritious or healthful; in like manner, what our mind derives from learning does not fail to be pleasurable, even if it be neither nourishing nor salutary. (*b*) This is what they say: Observation of nature is a food adapted to our minds; it elevates and enlarges us, makes us disdain low and earthly things, by comparing them with high and celestial ones; [4] the mere search for things occult and great is very pleasant, especially for him who thereby acquires reverence and awe in judging of them. These are phrases of their doctrine. The empty image of this distempered curiosity is seen still more distinctly in this other instance which they, honouring it, have so often in their mouths. Eudoxus wished and prayed to God that he might once see the sun near-by, to comprehend its shape, greatness, and beauty, on pain of being instantly burned up by it.[5] He desires, at the cost of his life, to acquire a knowledge, the use and possession of which would be at the

[1] See Plutarch, *Table-Talk.*

[2] It is better to learn useless things than nothing.— Seneca, *Epistle* 88.

[3] *En toute pasture.*

[4] See Cicero, *Academica*, II, 41.

[5] In 1588: *Comme fut Phæton.* See Plutarch, *That one can not live happily according to the doctrine of the Stoics.*

same moment taken from him; and for the sake of that sudden and fleeting knowledge, to lose all other knowledge that he has and that he might hereafter acquire.

(*a*) I can not readily persuade myself that Epicurus, Plato, and Pythagoras gave us for current coin their Atoms, their Ideas, and their Numbers. They were too wise to establish their articles of faith upon matter so uncertain and so debatable. But in the darkness and ignorance of the world, each of those great personages laboured to contribute some sort of luminous conception, and bestirred his mind to invent ideas which should have, at least, a pleasing and ingenious aspect; (*c*) provided that, false as they are, they could maintain themselves against opposing arguments; *unicuique ista pro ingenio finguntur, non ex scientiæ vi*.[1] (*a*) One of the ancients, when he was reproved for making profession of philosophy, of which, however, in his heart he made no great account, replied that that was truly to philosophise. They wished to take every thing into consideration, to weigh every thing, and found that occupation suited to our natural curiosity. Some things they wrote for public utility, for instance, their religions; [2] and it was reasonable, with that end in view, that they did not choose to examine closely [3] common beliefs, purposing not to engender hindrance to obedience to the laws and customs of their country. (*c*) Plato treats this secret point in a very open manner. For where he writes according to his own thought, he prescribes nothing with certainty.[4] When he acts the lawmaker, he borrows a magisterial and assertive style, and boldly intermingles in it the most fanciful of his conceptions, no less useful for convincing the multitude than ridiculous for convincing himself — knowing how well we are adapted to receive all impressions and especially the most wild and extravagant. And therefore, in his Laws, he takes great care that in public there shall be sung only poems whose

[1] And [inventions] are formed by the mind of each man, not by force of knowledge. — Seneca, *Suasoriæ*, 4.

[2] In 1580 to 1588: *car il n'est deffendu de faire nostre profit de la mensonge mesme, s'il est besoing.*

[3] *Espelucher au vif.*

[4] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Plato.*

fabulous stories tend to some useful end; it being so easy to impress all sorts of false imaginations on the human mind, that it is unfair not to feed it on profitable untruths rather than on untruths that are profitless or harmful.[1] He says very openly, in his *Republic*, that, to profit men, it is often necessary to deceive them.[2] It is easy to perceive that some schools have more followed truth, others utility, whereby the latter have gained credit. It is the pitiableness of our condition, that often what appears to our imagination as the most true does not appear to us to be the most useful in our life. The boldest schools — the Epicurean, the Pyrrhonian, the New Academic — are still, at the end of the reckoning, compelled to submit to the civil law.

(*a*) There are other subjects that they have closely examined, this man on one side, that on the other, each one labouring to give some semblance to them, wrong or right. For, having found nothing so hidden that they did not desire to speak of it, they were often compelled to forge feeble and foolish conjectures — not that they themselves took them as a foundation, or to establish any truth, but as a matter of study. (*c*) *Non tam id sensisse quod dicerent, quam exercere ingenia materiæ difficultate videntur voluisse.*[3] (*a*) And, if we did not take it thus, how should we palliate such great inconstancy, variety, and vanity of opinion, as we see to have been produced by those superior and admirable minds? For, as an example, what is more idle than to seek to conceive God by our analogies and conjectures, and to adjust him and the world in accordance with our capacity and our law, and to employ, to the detriment of the divinity, that small portion of ability which it has pleased him to impart to our natural condition; and because we can not extend our sight so far as to his glorious throne, to bring him down here, to our corruption and our wretchedness?

Of all human and long-existent beliefs concerning religion, that one seems to me to be most probable and most

[1] See Plato, *Republic*, end of book II and beginning of book III.

[2] See *Ibid.*, book V.

[3] They did not so much believe in the truth of what they said as they desired, it would seem, to exercise their minds on the difficulty of the subject. — Source not known.

justifiable which recognises God as a power incomprehensible, source and preserver of all things; all goodness, all perfection, receiving and accepting in good part the honour and reverence which human beings render him under whatever form, under whatever name, and in whatever manner it may be.[1]

(*c*) Jupiter omnipotens rerum, regumque deumque
Progenitor genitrixque.[2]

Such adoration has in all time been regarded graciously by Heaven. All governments have reaped fruit from their godliness. Impious men, impious acts have had always fitting fortunes. Pagan histories recognise authority, method, justice, and miracles and oracles employed for their benefit and instruction in their fabulous religions; God, in his mercy, deigning to foster irregularly[3] by these temporal favours the tender beginnings of a sort of shapeless knowledge of him, which natural reason gave us through the false images of our imaginings. Not false only, but impious also, and harmful, are those that man has fashioned by his own hands. (*a*) And of all the forms of worship that Paul found in favour at Athens, that which they had dedicated to a hidden and unknown Divinity seemed to him the most justifiable.[4]

(*c*) Pythagoras represented the truth as nearly as possible, judging that knowledge of this first cause and being of beings must be indefinite, without limitation, without elucidation;[5] that it was nothing else than the supreme striving

[1] In 1580 to 1588: *Car les deitez, ausquelles l'homme de sa propre invention a voulu donner une forme, elles sont injurieuses, pleines d'erreurs et d'impieté.*

[2] Almighty Jupiter, father and mother of all things, of kings and of gods. — Verses of Valerius Soranus, quoted twice by St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, VII, 9 and 11. Montaigne made an interesting change in the first line, which St. Augustine gives in both places as "Jupiter omnipotens *regum*, *rerumque*, etc." And he adds: "These verses Varro expoundeth, and calling the giver of seed the male and the receiver the female, accounteth Jove the world, that both giveth all seed itself, and receiveth it into itself."

[3] *Daignant à l'avanture fomenter.*

[4] See *Acts*, XVII, 23.

[5] *Sans prescription, sans declaration.* See Plutarch, *Life of Numa.*

of our imagination toward perfection, each one enlarging his conception of it according to his capacity. But if Numa attempted to make the devotion of his people conform to that model, to connect it with a purely intellectual religion without assigned object and without material admixture, he attempted something fruitless: the human mind, wandering among that multitude of formless ideas, could not keep itself in vigour; it must needs bring them together in a special image, fashioned after its will. The divine majesty has thus allowed itself to be circumscribed in some sort for us by corporeal limits; the supernatural and celestial sacraments bear tokens of our terrestrial condition; our worship is expressed by visible rites and audible words; for it is man who believes and who prays. I put aside the other arguments that may be employed about this subject. But it would be difficult to make me believe that the sight of our crucifixes and the depiction of that pitiable martyrdom, that the adornment and ceremonials [1] of our churches, that the voices attuned to the devoutness of our thought, and that the excitement of our senses do not warm people's souls with a religious enthusiasm of very profitable action.[2]

(*a*) Among those religions to which was given a body as necessity required, amid that universal blindness, I should, it seems to me, have most readily joined with them who adore the sun, —

> la lumiere commune,
> L'œil du monde; et si Dieu au chef porte des yeux,
> Les rayons du Soleil sont ses yeux radieux,
> Qui donnent vie à tous, nous maintiennent et gardent,
> Et les faicts des humains en ce monde regardent;
> Ce beau, ce grand soleil qui nous faict les saisons,
> Selon qu'il entre ou sort de ses douze maisons;
> Qui remplit l'univers de ses vertus connues;
> Qui, d'un traict de ses yeux, nous dissipe les nues;
> L'esprit, l'ame du monde, ardant et flamboyant,
> En la course d'un jour tout le Ciel tournoyant;
> Plein d'immense grandeur, rond, vagabond, et ferme;

[1] *Mouvemens ceremonieuses.*

[2] "Manifestly," says M. Villey, "in this whole passage, Montaigne criticises Protestantism."

Lequel tient dessoubs luy tout le monde pour terme;
En repos sans repos; oysif, et sans sejour;
Fils aisné de nature, et le pere du jour.[1]

Because, in addition to its grandeur and beauty, it is the most distant piece of this machine that we perceive, and, consequently, so little known, that they were pardonable for entering into wonder and reverence toward it.

(*c*) Thales, who first inquired into such matters, believed God to be a spirit who made all things of water; [2] Anaximander, that the gods were dying and being born at different times, and that they were worlds infinite in number; Anaximenes, that the air was God, that it was engendered and immense, ever in motion. Anaxagoras first maintained that the order and limit of all things is guided by the power and reason of an infinite intelligence; Alcmæon ascribed divinity to the sun, the moon, the stars, and the soul. Pythagoras conceived God as a spirit diffused through the nature of all things, from which our souls are detached; Parmenides, as a circle encompassing the sky, and supporting the world by the intensity of its light. Empedocles said that the four elements [3] of which all things are made were gods; Protagoras, that he had not to say whether they exist or not, or what they are; Democritus, sometimes that the images [4] and their circular movements are gods, sometimes the Nature which sends forth those images; and, again, our knowledge and intelligence. Plato disperses his belief in various aspects; in the *Timæus* he says that the father of the world can not be given a name; in the Laws, that we must not enquire about his existence; and elsewhere in these same

[1] Ronsard, *Remontrances au peuple de France.*

[2] This and the following theories of philosophers are taken from Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, I, 10–15.

[3] *Les quatre natures.*

[4] Montaigne uses *images* to translate Cicero's word *imagines*, which, in its turn, is a translation of Democritus's *eidolon* — a word for which no language since his time has found an exact equivalent. He attempted to express by it something that is *not* the "object" itself, but is, as it were, thrown off from the thing and preserves its characteristics. Lucretius, like Cicero, employs for this the word *imagines*, and his translators have used indiscriminately the words "images," "idols," "scales," and "phantoms."

books [1] he makes the world, the heavens, the stars, the earth, and our souls gods, and accepts, moreover, those which had been accepted by ancient doctrine in every commonwealth. Xenophon reports a like confusion in the teachings of Socrates: sometimes that we must not enquire about the form of God; and, again, he makes him maintain that the sun is God, and the soul God; first, that there is but one, and then, that there are many. Speusippus, nephew of Plato, makes God a certain force governing all things, and represents it as animal; Aristotle, at one moment that it is spirit, at another moment, the world; now he gives another master to this world, and now calls the ardour of the heavens [2] God. Zenocrates says there are eight gods: five nominated from the planets; the sixth composed of all the fixed stars as his members; the seventh and eighth are the sun and moon. Heraclides Ponticus does nothing but wander about among his opinions, and finally deprives God of sensation, and represents him as changing from one form to another, and then says that he is the heaven and the earth. Theophrastus, with like uncertainty, strays about among all his imaginations, ascribing the governance of the world, sometimes to an intelligence, sometimes to the heavens, sometimes to the stars. Strato thinks that it is Nature, having power to engender, to augment, to diminish, without form and feeling. Zeno, that it is the law of Nature, commanding good and prohibiting evil, which law has life [3] (and he omits the usual gods — Jupiter, Juno, Vesta); Diogenes Apolloniates, that it is the air.[4] Xenophanes makes God round, with sight and hearing, not breathing, having nothing in common with human nature.[5] Aristo considers the form of God incompre-

[1] That is, in the various books of the *Laws*. [2] *L'ardeur du ciel.*

[3] *Laquelle loy est un animant.* This is not an accurate statement of Zeno's doctrine, but is derived from Cicero's comment: *Quam legem quomodo efficiat animantem, intelligere non possumus.*

[4] This sentence is placed by Montaigne in a different connection from that in which it is placed in Cicero's enumeration. Cicero's words are *Aer quo Diogenes Apolloniates utitur deo.* Montaigne, in translating them, carelessly miswrote *l'aage* for *l'air*, and this error has been perpetuated to this day.

[5] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Diogenes.* Cicero's report of the doctrine of Xenophanes is quite different.

hensible, deprives him of feeling, and does not know whether he is a living thing or something else; Cleanthes, sometimes that he is the reason, sometimes the world, sometimes the soul of Nature, sometimes the vital heat [1] surrounding and enveloping all things. Perseus, a disciple of Zeno, held that the title of God had been given to those who had brought some noteworthy benefit into human life, and to the beneficial things themselves. Chrysippus made a confused collection of all the preceding opinions, and reckoned, among a thousand types of gods that he noted,[2] men also who have been deified. Diagoras and Theodorus denied flatly that there were any gods.[3] Epicurus makes the gods radiant, transparent, and unsubstantial,[4] sojourning, as between two forts, between two worlds, in complete security, vested with a human form and with limbs like ours, which limbs are of no use to them.[5]

Ego deum genus esse semper duxi, et dicam cœlitum;
Sed eos non curare opinor, quid agat humanum genus.[6]

Can you trust in your philosophy; can you boast of having found the bean in the cake, when you hear the noisy wrangling of so many philosophic brains? The unsettledness of non-ecclesiastical ways of thinking[7] has gained this for me, that characters and ideas unlike my own[8] do not displease me so much as they instruct me; do not cause me pride in comparing them so much as they humiliate me; and all other liberty of choice than that which comes from the immediate hand of God seems to me a liberty of small advantage. I set apart monstrous and unnatural courses of life.[9] The civil

[1] *La chaleur supreme.*

[2] *Contoit, entre mille formes de dieus qu'il faict.*

[3] See Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, I, 23.

[4] *Luisans, transparans, et perflables.*

[5] See Cicero, *De Div.*, II, 17.

[6] I have always said, and shall say, that there are heavenly gods; but I am of opinion that they do not govern in the doings of the human race. — Ennius, in *Ibid.*, II, 50.

[7] *Le trouble des formes mondaines.*

[8] *Les divers meurs et fantasies aus mienes.*

[9] This sentence is found only on the Bordeaux copy of 1588, and evidently should have been inserted, as a parenthesis, after "so much as they instruct me," just above.

governments of the world are, on this subject, no less various in opinion than are the schools; from which we may learn that fortune itself is not more diverse and variable than our reason, nor more blind and thoughtless.

(*a*) The things about which we are most ignorant are the most suitable to be deified; (*c*) therefore, to make gods of ourselves as the ancients did goes beyond extreme weakness of judgement.[1] (*a*) I should, indeed, have followed rather those who adored the serpent, the dog, and the ox,[2] because their natures and their being are less known to us; and we are more at liberty to imagine what we please about those beasts and to attribute to them extraordinary powers. But to have made gods possessing our own properties, the imperfection of which we know well; to have attributed to them desire, anger, vengeances, marriages, begettings, and relationships, love and jealousy, our limbs and our bones, our fevers and our pleasures, (*c*) our deaths and burials — (*a*) all this must have arisen from a marvellous intoxication of the human understanding.

(*b*) Quæ procul usque adeo divino ab numine distant,
Inque Deum numero quæ sint indigna videri.[3]

(*c*) *Formæ, ætates, vestitus, ornatus noti sunt; genera, conjugia, cognationes, omniaque traducta ad similitudinem imbecillitatis humanæ; nam et perturbatis animis inducuntur; accipimus enim deorum cupiditates, ægritudines, iracundias.*[4] (*a*) Even as to have attributed divinity, (*c*) not only to faith, to virtue, to honour, concord, liberty, victory, piety,[5] but also to lust, fraud, death, hatred, old age, adversity,

[1] *Foiblesse de discours.*

[2] That is, the Egyptians; see Plutarch, *Of Isis and Osiris.*

[3] These things are far from possessing divinity, and are unworthy of being reckoned in the number of the gods. — Lucretius, V, 122.

[4] Their forms, their ages, their garb, their adornments are known; their genealogies, their marriages, their relationships, all are brought into the likeness of human weaknesses; for they are represented as disturbed in mind; we accept even the idea of the lusts, the griefs, the angers of the gods. — Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, II, 28; taken by Montaigne from St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, IV, 30.

[5] See Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, II, 23; St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, IV, 30, and Vivès's *Commentary.*

(*a*) to fear, to fever, and to ill-fortune and other mishaps of our frail and feeble life.

(*b*) Quid juvat hoc, templis nostros inducere mores?
O curvæ in terris animæ et cælestium inanes! [1]

(*c*) The Egyptians, with an audacious wisdom, forbade, under pain of death,[2] that any one should say that Serapis and Isis, their gods, had formerly been men; yet no one was ignorant that they had been such. And their effigies, representing a finger on the lip, indicated, Varro says, this mysterious command to their priests, to keep silent concerning their mortal origin, as by necessary consequence it would annul all veneration for them.[3]

(*a*) Since man was so desirous to match himself with God, he would have done better, Cicero says, to have given to himself the divine properties and to have drawn them down here below, than to send there on high his corruption and his wretchedness; [4] but, truly apprehended, he has in different ways done both the one and the other with equal pride of opinion. When the philosophers scrutinise the hierarchy of their gods and appear eager to point out their alliances, their functions, and their power, I can not believe that they are speaking in earnest. When Plato expounds to us the verger of Pluto[5] and the corporeal pleasures or pains that await us after the destruction and annihilation of our bodies, and makes them agree with the sensibility that we have in this life, —

Secreti celant calles, et myrtea circum
Sylva tegit; curæ non ipsa in morte relinquunt; [6]

when Mahomet promises his followers a paradise hung with tapestry, decorated with gold and precious stones, peopled

[1] Why introduce morals into our temples? O minds bent to earth, and void of what pertains to heaven! — Persius, II, 62, 61.

[2] *Sur peine de la hart.*

[3] See St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, XVIII, 5.

[4] See Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, I, 26.

[5] See the *Gorgias* near the end, and *Republic*, book X; also Plutarch, *Of the face in the moon.*

[6] From those concealed in solitary paths and hidden in a myrtle grove, even in death anxieties do not depart. — Virgil, *Æneid*, VI, 443.

by maids of surpassing beauty, with exquisite wines and viands, I see clearly that they speak mockingly and adapt themselves to our dulness, to allure and entice us by these beliefs and hopes, suited to our mortal appetites. (*c*) Yet some in our own day have fallen into like error, promising themselves, after the resurrection, an earthly and finite life, accompanied by all sorts of this world's pleasures and advantages. (*a*) Do we believe that Plato, he who had such celestial conceptions and such great commerce with what is divine, that the appellation [1] has remained with him, thought that man, that poor creature, had aught in him relating to that incomprehensible power? and that he believed our languid faculties to have the capacity, that our strength of apprehension was forcible enough, to participate in everlasting beatitude or punishment? He should be told by human reason: "If the joys that you promise us in the other life are like those which I have known here below, they have nothing in common with infinity. If all my five natural senses should be overflowing with gladness, and this soul possessed of all the satisfaction that it can desire and hope for, — we know her powers, — that would still be nothing. If it be at all human,[2] there is nothing divine. If it is other than what appertains to our present condition, it can not be computed." (*c*) All satisfaction of mortals is mortal. (*a*) If the recognition of our parents, of our children, and of our friends in the other world can touch and delight us, if we are still open to such enjoyment, we are in terrestrial and finite conditions.[3] We can not rightly conceive the grandeur of these lofty and divine promises if we can at all conceive them; rightly to imagine them, they must be imagined as unimaginable, unspeakable, and incomprehensible, (*c*) and perfectly other than things of our miserable experience. (*a*) Eye has not seen, says St. Paul, nor can enter into the heart of man the fortune that God prepares for his own.[4] And if, to make us capable of it, our being is reshaped and altered (as thou, Plato, sayest by thy purifica-

[1] "The divine Plato."
[2] *S'il y a quelque chose du mien.*
[3] *Commoditez.*
[4] See *I Corinthians*, II, 9, after *Isaiah*, LXIV, 4.

tions [1]), it must be with so extreme and universal a change that according to natural philosophy it will no longer be we.

(*b*) Hector erat tunc cum bello certabat; at ille,
Tractus ab Æmonio, non erat Hector, equo.[2]

(*a*) It will be something else that will receive these rewards, —

(*b*) Quod mutatur, enim dissolvitur; interit ergo;
Trajiciuntur enim partes atque ordine migrant.[3]

(*a*) For, in the Metempsychosis of Pythagoras, and the change of habitation which he imagined for our souls, do we conceive that to the lion in which is the soul of Cæsar are united the dispositions which belonged to Cæsar, (*c*) or that this animal is Cæsar? [4] If it were he, those would be in the right, who, contesting this belief, in opposition to Plato, cast it in his teeth that the son might be found riding his mother invested with a mule's body, and similar absurdities.[5] (*a*) And do we think that in the mutations which are made of the bodies of animals to others of the same species, the newcomers are not different from their predecessors? From the ashes of a phœnix is engendered, it is said, a worm, and then another phœnix; [6] this second phœnix — who can imagine that it is not different from the first one? The worms that make our silk — we see them, as it were, die and dry up, and from that same body a moth is produced, and from that another worm, which it would be absurd to regard as being still the first one. That which has once ceased to be is no more, —

Nec si materiam nostram collegerit ætas
Post obitum, rursumque redegerit, ut sita nunc est,

[1] See Plutarch, *Of the face in the moon*.

[2] It was Hector who fought in battle; but that which was dragged by the horses of the Thessalian [Achilles] was not Hector. — Ovid, *Tristia*, III, 11, 27.

[3] What is changed is dissolved; it therefore perishes; for the parts are transposed and quit their order. — Lucretius, III, 756.

[4] In 1580 to 1588: *et qu'il souffre pour luy*.

[5] The reference is to Porphyrus. See St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, X, 30, 621.

[6] See Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, X, 2.

Atque iterum nobis fuerint data lumina vitæ,
Pertineat quidquam tamen ad nos id quoque factum,
Interrupta semel cum sit repetentia nostra.[1]

And when, Plato, thou sayest elsewhere that it will be the spiritual part of man to which it will belong to enjoy the reward of the other life,[2] thou sayest a thing of as little significance, —

(*b*) Scilicet, avolsis radicibus, ut nequit ullam
Dispicere ipse oculus rem, seorsum corpore toto.[3]

(*a*) For in this case it will not be man, nor consequently we, to whom that enjoyment will belong; for we are composed of two principal essential parts, the separation of which is the death and destruction of our existence;

(*b*) Inter enim jacta est vitai pausa, vageque
Deerrarunt passim motus ab sensibus omnes.[4]

(*a*) We do not say that man suffers when worms devour his limbs, with which he lived, and that the earth consumes them, —

Et nihil hoc ad nos, qui coitu conjugioque
Corporis atque animæ consistimus uniter apti.[5]

[1] Nor, if time should gather up our material after our death and put it anew in the position in which it now is, this action would not at all concern us, when once our consciousness is interrupted. — Lucretius, III, 847.

[2] See Plutarch, *Of the face in the moon.*

[3] As the eye torn from its socket can see of itself nothing apart from the rest of the body. — Lucretius, III, 563.

[4] Lucretius, III, 860. It is impossible so to translate these words as equally to correspond with the thought in the mind of Lucretius and the meaning given to them by Montaigne. Lucretius is speaking of the possibility that these very same seeds of which we now are formed have often before been placed in the same order in which they now are; and yet we can not recover this in memory. He says (Munro's translation): "A break in our existence has been interposed, and all the motions have wandered to and fro, astray from the sensations they produced." Montaigne is declaring that the separation of soul and body is the death of our personality. "For a cessation of life is thrown between these states, and on every side all the motions of sense wander pell-mell."

[5] And this is nothing to us, who, by the union and marriage of body and soul, are made all one. — Lucretius, III, 845. The modern text is: *Nil tamen est ad nos qui comptu*, etc.

Moreover, upon what basis of their justice can the gods recognise and reward man after his death for his good and virtuous acts, since it was they themselves who set in motion and created them in him? And why should they be displeased and avenge upon him his vicious acts, since they themselves have created him in this imperfect condition, and by the slightest action [1] of their will they can prevent him from doing amiss? Might not Epicurus object this to Plato, with much show of human reason, (*c*) if he did not often take shelter behind the saying that it is impossible to establish by mortal nature any thing certain concerning immortal nature? (*a*) She [2] but mistakes the road everywhere, but especially when she intermeddles with divine matters. Who perceives this more manifestly than we? For, although we have given her definite and infallible principles, even though we should illumine the steps by the sacred lamp of the truth, which it has pleased God to communicate to us, we nevertheless daily see that, however little she may digress from the common path, and turn aside or stray from the way marked out and trodden by the Church, she immediately loses herself, is entangled and impeded, whirling about and floating in that vast, disturbed, and fluctuating sea of human opinions, without restraint and without aim. As soon as she loses that broad and beaten road, she wanders about, divided and dispersed, in a thousand different directions.

Man can be only what he is, and can conceive only in accordance with his capacity. (*b*) It is greater presumption, says Plutarch, for those who are but men to undertake to speak and reason concerning gods and demigods, than it is for a man ignorant of music to attempt to judge those who sing, or for a man who was never in the field to attempt to discuss arms and warfare, presuming to understand by some slight impression the fact of an art which is beyond his knowledge.[3] (*a*) Antiquity thought, so I believe, that it was conferring a boon upon the divine mightiness by putting it

[1] *D'un seul clin.*

[2] That is, the reason.

[3] See Plutarch, *Why divine justice sometimes delays the punishment of evil doing.*

on a par with man, investing it with his faculties, and endowing it with his fine humours (*c*) and most shameful necessities, (*a*) offering our viands to eat, (*c*) and our dances, our mummeries, and play-acting to amuse it, (*a*) our garments to clothe it, and our houses to dwell in; charming it with the odour of incense and the sounds of music, with wreaths and nosegays; (*c*) and, to bring it into agreement with our vicious passions, attributing to its justice a [1] more than human vengeance, delighting it by the ruin and dispersal of things by it created and preserved (like Tiberius Sempronius, who caused to be burned, as a sacrifice to Vulcan, the rich booty and weapons that he had taken from his enemies in Sardinia; [2] and Paulus Æmilius, those from Macedonia, as a sacrifice to Mars and Minerva; [3] and Alexander, when he reached the Indian Ocean, cast into the sea in honour of Thetis many great vessels of gold [4]); heaping up its altars, too, by the slaughter, not only of harmless beasts, but of men likewise, (*a*) as many nations, and among others our own, had in common custom. And I think that there is no nation exempt from having made trial of this.

(*b*) Sulmone creatos
Quattuor hic juvenes, totidem quos educat Ufens,
Viventes rapit, inferias quos immolet umbris.[5]

(*c*) The Getæ deem themselves immortal and their death to be simply the beginning of a journey toward their god, Zamolxis. Every five years they send to him some one from among them, to ask from him necessary things. This deputy is chosen by lot. And the manner of despatching him is that, after they have informed him by word of mouth of his commission, of those who are with him, three hold erect as many javelins, upon which the others hurl him with all their strength. If he is pierced in a mortal part, and dies quickly, that is to them a sure evidence of divine favour; if he es-

[1] *Flatant sa justice d'une.*

[2] See Livy, XLI, 16.

[3] See Idem, XLV, 33.

[4] See Arrian, *Anabasis*, VI, 19, 5; Diodorus Siculus, XVII, 104.1.

[5] Then he seized four young men, sons of Sulmo, and as many who had been brought up by the Ufens, to sacrifice them, living, to the manes [of Pallas]. — Virgil, *Æneid*, X, 517.

capes, they regard him as wicked and execrable, and depute another of them in like manner.[1] Amestris, the mother of Xerxes, when an old woman, once caused fourteen youths of the best families of Persia to be buried alive, to propitiate, in accordance with the religion of the country, some god of the under-world.[2] Even to-day the idols of Themistitan are strengthened with the blood of little children; and they care for no sacrifice other than of those pure infantine souls: justice athirst for the blood of innocence, —

Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum![3]

(*b*) The Carthaginians immolated their own children to Saturn; and he who had none bought them, the father and mother, however, being required to be present at that ceremony, with joyous and satisfied bearing.[4] (*a*) It was a strange conception, to seek to pay for the divine kindness with our affliction; like the Lacedæmonians, who showed tender regard for their Diana[5] by cruel torture of young boys, whom they caused to be whipped, often to death, in her honour.[6] It was an extraordinary humour, to seek to gratify the architect by the overthrow of his structure, and to seek to cancel the penalty due to the guilty by the punishment of the not guilty; and that poor Iphigenia, in the port of Aulis, by her death and by her immolation, should absolve before God the Greek army from the offences that it had committed: —

(*b*) Et casta inceste, nubendi tempore in ipso,
Hostia concideret mactatu mæsta parentis;[7]

(*c*) and that those two beauteous and noble souls of the Decii, father and son, to propitiate the favour of the gods for the affairs of Rome, should throw themselves headlong

[1] See Herodotus, IV, 94.
[2] See Plutarch, *Of Superstition;* Herodotus, VII, 114.
[3] So greatly can religion counsel ill deeds! — Lucretius, I, 101.
[4] See Plutarch, *Of Superstition.*
[5] *Qui mignardoient leur Diane.*
[6] See Plutarch, *Apothegms of the Lacedæmonians.*
[7] And the stainless victim grievously fell, stained with blood, in the very season of marriage, offered to the gods by a father. — Lucretius, I, 98.

into the thickest press of the enemy.[1] *Quæ fuit tanta deorum iniquitas, ut placari populo Romano non possent, nisi tales viri occidissent?*[2] (*a*) To which may be added that it is not for the criminal to have himself whipped by his own rule and at his own time: (*b*) it is for the judge, who considers as chastisement only the penalty he orders, (*c*) and can not regard as punishment that which is to the liking of him who suffers it. Divine vengeance presupposes our entire repugnance to its decree and to our penalty. (*b*) And the humour of Polycrates, Tyrant of Samos, was absurd, who, to interrupt the course of his constant good fortune and to balance it, threw into the sea the most dear and precious jewel he possessed, deeming that, by this intended mishap, he should satisfy the revolution and vicissitude of fortune; (*c*) and she, to deride his folly, caused that same jewel, found in the belly of a fish, to return into his hands.[3] And again, of what use are the rendings and dismemberings of the Corybantes, the Mœnads, and, in our time, of the Mohammedans, who slash the face, the stomach, the limbs, to please their prophet, whilst the crime rests in the will, not in the breast, the eyes, the genitories, the paunch, the shoulders, and the throat. *Tantus est perturbatæ mentis et sedibus suis pulsæ furor, ut sic dii placentur, quemadmodum ne homines quidem sæviunt.*[4]

This natural contexture[5] concerns in its use not ourselves alone, but also the service of God and of our fellow men; it is a wrong to others to injure the body knowingly, as it is to kill ourselves on any pretext whatsoever. It seems like great cowardice and treachery to maltreat the body and mar its functions, stupid and servile as they are, in order to spare the soul the perplexity of guiding them according to

[1] In 1588: *et que Decius, . . . se brulast tout vif en holocauste à Saturne, entre les deux armées.*

[2] Was the indignation of the gods so great that they could not be well disposed to the Roman people unless such men died? — Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, III, 6.

[3] See Herodotus, III, 41, 42.

[4] Greatly is the mind deranged and mastered by madness that thinks to please the gods by exercising cruelties in truth beyond those of men. — St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, VI, 10.

[5] That is, the human body.

reason. *Ubi iratos deos timent, qui sic propitios habere merentur? In regiæ libidinis voluptatem castrati sunt quidam; sed nemo sibi, ne vir esset, jubente domino, manus intulit.*[1] (*a*) Thus they overloaded their religion with many evil details;

sæpius olim
Religio peperit scelerosa atqui impia facta.[2]

Now nothing of ours can be compared or likened in any way whatsoever to the divine nature, which does not stain it and mark it with just so much imperfection. That infinite beauty, power, and goodness, how can it admit of any correspondence and similitude with a thing so abject as man, without extreme loss and deterioration of its divine grandeur? (*c*) *Infirmum dei fortius est hominibus, et stultum dei sapientius est hominibus.*[3] Stilpo, the philosopher, being asked whether the gods rejoiced in the honours and sacrifices we pay them, "You are indiscreet," he replied; "let us draw aside if you wish to talk of that."[4] (*a*) Yet we prescribe for him[5] limits, we hold his power besieged by our reasonings (I call our vain fancies and our dreams reasoning, with the permission of philosophy, which says that even the fool and the sinner are mad by reasoning, but that it is a reasoning of a special kind); we would subject him to the idle and feeble conceptions of our minds — him who created both ourselves and our intelligence.

Because nothing is made of nothing, God can not have been able to make the world without matter. What! has God given us knowledge of the keys and the uttermost extent of his power? has he bound himself not to go beyond

[1] Where do those fear the anger of the gods, who think in this way to gain their favour? Some have been castrated for the pleasure of licentious kings; but no one, with his own hand, at the command of a master, has made himself not a man. — St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, after Seneca.

[2] Religion gave birth more often formerly to sinful and unholy deeds. — Lucretius, I, 82. Modern texts read *illa* for *olim*.

[3] The weakness of God is stronger than men; and the foolishness of God is wiser than men. — *I Corinthians*, I, 25.

[4] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Stilpo*.

[5] That is, "the divine nature." The thread is broken by the 1595 interpolation.

the limits of our understanding? Assume, O man, that thou hast been able to observe here some traces of his manifestations: dost thou think that he has here employed all that he is capable of, and that he has made use of all his thoughts [1] and all his ideas in this work? Thou seest only the ordering and the government of this little cave, wherein thou art placed, if, indeed, thou dost see it at all; his divinity has jurisdiction infinitely wider; this part is nothing compared with the whole, —

omnia cum cœlo terraque marique
Nil sunt ad summam summaï totius omnem,[2] —

it is a municipal law that thou dost allege; thou knowest not what is the universal law. Fasten thyself to that to which thou art subject, but fasten not him; he is not thine associate or fellow citizen or comrade; if he has in any way imparted himself to thee, it is not by stooping to thy littleness or by giving thee full knowledge [3] of his power. The human body can not fly to the clouds, that is thy concern; [4] the sun runs without resting his regular course; the bounds of the seas and the earth can not be confounded; water is unstable and without firmness; a wall without a breach is impenetrable by a solid body; a man can not preserve his life in flames; he can not be bodily both in heaven and on earth and in a thousand places at once. It is for thee that God has made these rules; it is thou whom they bind. He has testified to Christians that he has done away with them all, when it has so pleased him. Why, in truth, all-powerful as he is, should he have restrained his forces to a certain degree? In whose favour would he have forgone his prerogative? Thy reasoning has in no other matter more verisimilitude and foundation than in persuading thee of the plurality of worlds, —

[1] *Formes = conceptions mentales.*

[2] All things together with heaven and earth and sea are nothing to the whole sum of the universal sums. — Lucretius, VI, 678.

[3] *Le contrerolle.*

[4] *C'est pour toy.* It may be observed that each of the sentences immediately following contains a transparent allusion to some passage in the Scriptures.

(*b*) Terramque, et solem, lunam, mare, cætera quæ sunt,
Non esse unica, sed numero magis innumerali.[1]

(*a*) The most famous minds of past time believed it, and some of those of our own day, compelled by the evidence of human reason. Forasmuch as in this structure that we behold there is nothing single and one, —

(*b*) cum in summa res nulla sit una,
Unica quæ gignatur, et unica solaque crescat,[2] —

(*a*) and all species are multiplied by some number; therefore it seems to be not probable that God has created this sole work without any thing resembling it,[3] and that all matter of this kind was used up in this single object;

(*b*) Quare etiam atque etiam tales fateare necesse est
Esse alios alibi congressus materiaï,
Qualis hic est avido complexu quem tenet æther;[4]

(*a*) especially if it be a living thing,[5] as its motions make so credible (*c*) that Plato asserts it,[6] and many in our day either allow it or dare not disallow it;[7] any more than the ancient belief that the sky, the stars, and other parts of the world are creatures composed of body and spirit, mortal by virtue of their composition, but immortal by the decree of the creator.

(*a*) Now, if there are many worlds, as was believed by Democritus,[8] Epicurus, and almost all philosophy, how do we know whether the origins and regulations of this one are of like kind with the other? They have, perchance, another aspect and another form of government. (*c*) Epicurus con-

[1] Earth and sun, moon, sea, and all things else that are not single in their kind, but in number past numbering. — Lucretius, II, 1085.

[2] In the sum of all there is no one thing that is begotten single of its kind and grows up single of its kind, and sole. — Ibid., 1077.

[3] *Sans compaignon.*

[4] Wherefore I say again and again, you must admit that there are elsewhere other considerations of matter like this which ether holds in its greedy grasp. — Ibid., 1064.

[5] See Plutarch, *Of the opinions of philosophers.*

[6] In the *Timæus;* but Montaigne, doubtless, took it from St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, X, 29.

[7] See St. Augustine, *Ibid.*, XIII, 16. Origen, especially, is referred to.

[8] In 1580 to 1588: *Plato.* See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Democritus.*

ceives them as in some cases similar and in some cases dissimilar.[1] (*a*) We see in this world an infinite difference and variety, simply from the distance between places. Neither corn nor wine nor any of our animals is found in that new corner of the world which our fathers have discovered: all there is different. (*c*) And in times past, see in how many parts of the world there was no knowledge, either of Bacchus or of Ceres.

(*a*) For whoever chooses to believe Pliny and Herodotus, there are kinds of men in certain regions who bear very little resemblance to us.[2] (*b*) And there are mongrel and indefinite forms between human nature and brutish nature. There are countries where men are born without heads, having their eyes and mouth in the breast; where they are all hermaphrodites; where they walk on four feet; where they have but one eye in the forehead, and a head more like that of a dog than like ours; where they are half fish in the lower parts, and live in the water; where the women bear children at five years of age and live only eight years; where their heads and the skin of their foreheads are so hard that a weapon can not cut into them, but is blunted by them; where the men are beardless; (*c*) nations without use and knowledge of fire; others whose sperm is of a dark colour. (*b*) What of those who by nature change to wolves, to mares, and then again to men? (*a*) And if it be true, as Plutarch says,[3] that in some regions of the Indies there are men without mouths who are nourished by the smell of certain odours, how many of our descriptions are false! He [4] is no longer risible,[5] nor, perchance, capable of reason or of society. The arrangement and the cause of our internal structure would be, for the most part, purposeless.

Furthermore, how many things are known to us, which

[1] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Epicurus*. Epicurus thought that some were spherical, some elliptical, etc.

[2] The pseudo-facts that Montaigne here narrates are to be found in Herodotus (IV, 191; III, 116; IV, 27; III, 101), and in Pliny (*Natural History*, VII, 2; VIII, 22); but Pliny disavows belief in them, and Montaigne very probably took them second-hand from other works.

[3] See Plutarch, *Of the face in the moon*.

[4] That is, man — men like this.

[5] That is, able to laugh.

conflict with the fine rules that we have cut out and prescribed for nature? And we would undertake to bind to them God himself! How many things do we call miraculous and contrary to nature! (*c*) That is done by every man and every nation in proportion to their ignorance. (*a*) How many hidden properties and quintessences do we find! For to live according to nature [1] is, for us, to live according to our intelligence so far as that can go, and so far as we can see by its means; that which is beyond is outside of nature and irregular.[2] Now, by this reckoning, to the most well-informed and ablest men every thing would be outside of nature; for human reason has persuaded them that it has neither foothold nor any basis whatsoever, not enough even to make it certain (*c*) that snow is white (and Anaxagoras said that it is black [3]); whether any thing has existence, or nothing has existence; whether there be knowledge or ignorance — which Metrodorus Chius denied that man could say [4]; or (*a*) whether we be alive; Euripides being in doubt whether the life we are living is life, or whether it is what we call death that may be life: —

> Τὶς δ'οἶδεν εἰ ζῆν τουθ ὸ κέκληται θανεῖν,
> Τό ζῆν δὲ θνέσκειν ἔστι.[5]

(*b*) And not without probability; for why do we take our title to existence from that instant which is but a lightning-flash in the infinite course of an eternal night, and so brief an interruption of our perpetual and natural condition, (*c*) death occupying all before and all after that moment, and even a goodly part of that moment? (*b*) Others swear that there is no movement, that nothing stirs; (*c*) as the

[1] Cf. Book I, chap. 27 (Vol. I, pp. 239, 240); Book II, chap. 30, at the end.

[2] *Monstreux et desordonné.*

[3] See Cicero, *Academica*, II, 23 and 31.

[4] See *Ibid.*

[5] Montaigne himself translates before quoting. This was one of the passages inscribed in his library. The verses are found, in slightly different form, in Sextus Empiricus, Diogenes Laertius (*Pyrrho*), in the *Gorgias* of Plato, and in Stobæus, *Sermons* 121 and 122; in the latter Stobæus cites the passage of the *Gorgias* which ascribes this thought to Euripides.

followers of Melissus (for, if there is but one, spherical movement can not be used by it nor movement from place to place, as Plato proves);[1] (*b*) that there is neither generation nor distraction in nature.[2]

(*c*) Protagoras says that there is nothing in nature save doubt; that all things can be disputed for and against this very fact, whether all things can be disputed for and against; Nausiphanes, that, of things which seem to be, nothing is more existent than non-existent; that there is nothing certain save uncertainty; Parmenides, that of that which seems to be, there is no generality, that there is but one;[3] Zeno, that there is not even one, and that there is nothing. If there were one, it would be either in another or in itself; if it is in another, there are two; if it is in itself, there are again two, that which contains and that which is contained.[4] According to these dogmas, the nature of things is but a shadow, either false or nothingness.[5]

(*a*) It has always seemed to me that, for a Christian man, this sort of language is full of rashness and irreverence: God can not die, God can not contradict himself, God can not do this or that. I do not find it well thus to confine the divine power within the determinations of our phrase-making.[6] And what is understood by these propositions we should express more reverently and devoutly. Our language has its weaknesses and its defects, like all things else. The greater number of the causes of the confusions of the world are

[1] See Plato, *Theætetus:* "'That alone is unmoved which is named the universe.' This is the language of Parmenides, Melissus and their followers, who stoutly maintain that all being is one and self-contained, and has no place in which to move." (Jowett's translation.) See also Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Melissus:* "Placuit autem si universum infinitum esse, et immutabile atque immobile et unum sibi ipsi simile ac plenum. Motumque non esse, verum videri esse."

[2] In 1588: *Je ne sçay si la doctrine ecclesiastique en juge autrement, et me soubmets en tout et par tout à son ordonnance.*

[3] See Seneca, *Epistle* 88. Seneca's words as to Parmenides may help to elucidate the obscurity: *Parmenides ait, "ex his, quæ videntur, nihil esse ab uno diversum." . . . Si Parmenidi* [*credo*], *nihil est præter unum.*

[4] See Plato, *Parmenides.*

[5] See Seneca, *Epistle* 88: *Tota rerum natura umbra est, aut inanis, aut fallax.*

[6] *Soubs les lois de nostre parolle.*

grammatical.[1] Our lawsuits arise solely from discussion about the interpretation of the laws; and the greater number of wars, from failure to express clearly the conventions and treaties of amity between rulers. How many quarrels, and what momentous ones, have been caused in the world by the uncertainty as to the meaning of the syllable *Hoc!*[2] (*b*) Let us take the forms of phrase which logic itself will give us as clearest. If you say, "It is fine weather," and if you speak the truth, it is then fine weather. Have we not here an accurate mode of speech? Yet it will mislead us. That this is so, let us follow up the example. If you say, "I lie," and you speak the truth, then you lie.[3] The skill, the reasoning, the force of this conclusion are the same as in the other; none the less, we are stuck fast in the mud. (*a*) I observe the Pyrrhonian philosophers, that they are not able to express their general conception by any manner of speech, for they have need of a new language. Ours is entirely composed of affirmative propositions, which are wholly hostile to them; in so much that, when they say, "I doubt," they are immediately at our mercy and forced to acknowledge that, at least, they assert and know this, that they doubt. Thus they have been compelled to take refuge in this medical comparison, without which their humour would be inexplicable: they say that, when they declare, "I do not know," or "I doubt," this proposition carries itself away and, at the same time, the remainder, neither more nor less than rhubarb, which expels the peccant humours, and at the same time carries itself off.[4] (*b*) This idea is more clearly conceived by a question, "What do I know?" which I employ, with the device of a pair of scales.

(*a*) See what use is made of this manner of speaking, full of irreverence. In the disputes now going on about our religion, if you press your opponents too far, they will tell you

[1] Cf. Book III, chap. 13, near the beginning: *Pourquoy est-ce que nostre langage commun, si aisé à tout autre usage, devient obscur et non intelligible en un contract et testament?* etc.

[2] The first word in the consecration of the sacrament of the Eucharist: *Hoc est corpus meus.* Montaigne refers to the great quarrel concerning Transubstantiation.

[3] See Cicero, *Academica*, II, 29.

[4] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Pyrrho.*

confidently that it is not in the power of God to make his body be in paradise and on the earth and in several places at once. And that ancient scoffer[1] — how he turns it to account! "At all events," he says, "it is no slight consolation to man that he sees that God can not do all things; for he can not kill himself when he would, which is the greatest privilege that we have in our state; he can not make mortals immortal; nor bring back to life those who have gone; nor make it so that he who has lived has not lived, that he who has received honours has not had them; having no other power over the past than oblivion. And — that with this connection between man and God may be associated also amusing instances — he can not make twice ten not be twenty." That is what he[2] says, and what a Christian should not let pass his lips. Whereas, on the contrary, it seems that men seek this foolish arrogance of language to reduce God to their measure: —

cras vel atra
Nube polum pater occupato,
Vel sole puro; non tamen irritum
Quodcumque retro est, efficiet, neque
Diffinget infectumque reddet
Quod fugiens semel hora vexit.[3]

When we say that the infinity of the ages, past as well as future, is to God but an instant; that his kindness, wisdom, power are identical with his essence, our speech so says, but our intelligence does not comprehend it. And always our presumption would make the Divinity pass through our sieve. And hence are engendered all the idle fancies and errors with which the world abounds, reducing and weighing in its balance a thing so beyond its standard of weight.[4] (*c*) *Mirum quo procedat improbitas cordis humani, parvulo*

[1] In 1580 to 1588: *ce moqueur de Pline.* See Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, II, 5 (7).

[2] Pliny.

[3] Let the Father to-morrow cover the heavens with a dark cloud or with pure sunshine; he can not render vain the past, or destroy what the fleeting hour has borne away. — Horace, *Odes*, III, 29.43.

[4] *De son poix.* In 1580 to 1588: *de sa suffisance.*

aliquo invitata successu.[1] How insolently the Stoics take Epicurus to task because he maintains that to be truly good and happy belongs to God alone, and that the wise man has only a shadow and similitude thereof.[2] (*a*) How rashly they linked God with destiny (which, with my consent, none who bears the name of Christian shall ever do again); and Thales, Plato, and Pythagoras enslaved him to necessity. This arrogance of seeking to discover God with our eyes has caused one of our writers of great note[3] to give to the divinity a corporeal form. (*b*) And this is the reason that it happens every day that we ascribe to God events of importance with a special attribution. Because they are important to us, it seems as if they were important to him also, and that he regards them more fully and more carefully than events which are slight in our eyes, or of usual occurrence. (*c*) *Magna dii curant, parva negligunt*.[4] Listen to this writer's example; it will throw light on his thought: *Nec in regnis quidem reges omnia minima curant*.[5] As if it were more or less to him to shake an empire or the leaf of a tree; and as if his providence were differently exerted in guiding the result of a battle and the skip of a flea. The hand of his governance has a like hold upon all things, with the same force and the same method; our concern in them adds nothing thereto; our processes and our proportions do not affect it.[6] *Deus ita artifex magnus in magnis, ut minor non sit in parvis*.[7]

Our arrogance is always putting before us this blasphemous similarity. Because our occupations embarrass us, Strato endowed the gods with complete immunity from duties, as are their priests. He makes all things to be produced and nourished by Nature, and constructs parts of the

[1] It is astonishing how far the audacity of the human creature will go, if encouraged by any trifling success. — Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, II, 23.

[2] See Seneca, *Epistle* 92.27.

[3] Tertullian.

[4] The gods concern themselves about great things; little things they heed not. — Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, II, 66.

[5] Nor in truth are kings attentive to all the details in their kingdoms. — *Ibid.*, III, 35.

[6] *Nos mouvemens et nos mesures ne le touchent pas.*

[7] God, so great an artificer in great things, is not less great in small things. — St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, XI, 22.

world with her weights and processes,[1] relieving human nature from the fear of divine judgements.[2] *Quod beatum æternumque sit, id nec habere negotii quicquam, nec exhibere alteri.*[3] Nature wills that like things shall have a like relation. Therefore the infinite number of mortals determines an equal number of immortals. The innumerable things that kill and injure presuppose as many that preserve and benefit.[4] As the souls of the gods, without speech, without eyes, without ears, perceive among themselves, each what another feels, and judge our thoughts, so the souls of men, when they are free and loosed from the body by sleep or by some transport, divine, prophesy, and see things which they could not see when connected with the body.[5]

(*a*) Men, says St. Paul, have become fools thinking themselves to be wise, and have changed the incorruptible God into a likeness of corruptible man.[6] (*b*) Consider a little the trickeries of the ancient deifications. After the grand and stately pomp of the obsequies,[7] when the fire was reaching the top of the funeral pile and caught the place where the dead body lay, at that moment they set free an eagle, which, flying aloft, was a sign that the soul was going to paradise. We have a thousand medals, — and especially of that virtuous woman, Faustina, — in which the eagle is represented as bearing these deified souls up to heaven on its shoulders, like a dead kid.[8] It is a pity that we deceive ourselves with our own pretendings and devices, —

Quod finxere, timent,[9] —

like children who are frightened by their playfellow's face when they themselves have begrimed and blackened it. (*c*) *Quasi quicquam infelicius sit homine cui sua figmenta*

[1] *De ses pois et mouvemens.*

[2] See Cicero, *Academica*, II, 38.

[3] A blest and eternal being is not troubled with affairs, nor deputes them to others. — Idem, *De Nat. Deor.*, I, 17.

[4] See *Ibid.*, I, 19.

[5] See Cicero, *De Div.*, I, 57.

[6] See *Romans*, I, 22, 23.

[7] *Enterrement* (burial) — an odd word to be used in this connection.

[8] See Herodian, book IV.

[9] What they themselves create, they are afraid of. — Lucan, I, 486.

dominantur.[1] It is very far from doing honour to him who made us, to do honour to him whom we have made.[2] (*b*) Augustus had more temples than Jupiter, served with as much devotion and belief in miracles. The Thasians, by way of recompense for the benefactions they had received from Agesilaus, came to tell him that they had canonised him. "Has your nation," he said to them, "this power of making gods of whom it pleases? Do so to some one of yourselves, that I may see, and then, (*c*) when I shall have seen how he likes it, (*b*) I will give you many thanks for your offer."[3]

(*c*) Man is indeed mad. He could not fashion a worm, and he fashions gods by the dozen. Hear Trismegistus praising our ability: "Of all admirable things, this is beyond admiration, that man has been able to discover the divine nature and to make it."[4] (*b*) Look at these arguments of the school of philosophy itself,

> Nosse cui divos et cœli numina soli,
> Aut soli nescire, datum:[5]

"If God exists, he is animal; if he is animal, he has sensation; if he has sensation, he is subject to corruption. If he is without body, he is without soul, and consequently without action; and if he has body, he is perishable."[6] — There 's a trump card![7] (*c*) "We are incapable of having made the world; so there is some superior nature which has set its hand to it. It would be absurd arrogance to estimate ourselves as the most perfect thing in this universe; so there is something better — that something is God. When you see a rich and stately dwelling, although you may not know who is the master of it, yet you do not say that it was built for

[1] What is more unfortunate than man, who is ruled by the phantoms of his own imagination! — Source unknown.

[2] See St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, VIII, 23, 24.

[3] See Plutarch, *Apothegms of the Lacedæmonians*.

[4] In a marginal addition on the Bordeaux copy Montaigne wrote, then erased, the original text of St. Augustine (*De Civ. Dei*, VIII, 24), which he here translates.

[5] To whom alone it is given to know the gods and the heavenly powers, or to know that they can not be known. — Lucan, I, 452. The original text is: *Solis nosse divos et cœli numina vobis*.

[6] See Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, III, 13, 14.

[7] *Voyla pas triomfe!*

rats. And this divine structure that we see of the heavenly palace, is it not to be believed that it is the abode of some master greater than we are? Is not the highest always the noblest? And we are placed at the bottom. Nothing without soul and without reason can bring forth a living being capable of reason; the world brings us forth, so it has soul and reason. Each part of us is less than ourselves; we are a part of the world; so the world is endued with wisdom and reason, and more abundantly than we are. It is a fine thing to have a great government; so the government of the world belongs to some fortunate nature. The stars do us no harm, so they are full of kindliness.[1] (*b*) We have need of sustenance; so also have the gods, and are nourished by the vapours from here below.[2] (*c*) Earthly advantages are not advantages for gods; so they are not advantages for us. To offend and to be offended are equally evidences of weakness; so it is folly to fear God. God is good by nature, man by his endeavour, which is more. There is no distinction between divine wisdom and human wisdom other than that the former is eternal; now, duration adds nothing to wisdom; wherefore behold us equals.[3] (*b*) We have life, reason, and liberty; we value goodness, charity, and justice; so these qualities are in him. In short, the building up and the unbuilding, the conditions of divinity, are arranged by man according to the relation to himself. What a pattern and what a model! Let us stretch and exalt and enlarge human qualities as much as we please; puff thyself up, poor man, and again, and again, and again: —

Non, si te ruperis, inquit.[4]

(*c*) *Profecto non Deum, quem cogitare non possunt, sed semet ipsos pro illo cogitantes, non illum sed se ipsos non illi sed sibi comparant.*[5]

[1] See Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, II, 6, 8.

[2] See *Ibid.*, 16.

[3] *Parquoy nous voila compaignons.*

[4] "Not if you burst," he said. — Horace, *Satires*, II, 3.319. The reference is to the fable of the frog and the ox.

[5] Assuredly, in their thoughts they do not, for they can not, conceive of God; they regard themselves, not him; they compare him, not with himself, but with themselves. — St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, XII, 18.

(*b*) In the things of nature, results but half represent their causes: how about this one?[1] It is above the order of nature; its position is too lofty, too distant, and too commanding, to suffer our judgement to bind and pinion it. It is not through ourselves that we reach it; that is too low a course. We are no nearer heaven on Mont Cenis than at the bottom of the sea, as your astrolabe will show you.[2] They debase God even to the carnal knowledge of women: how many times, how many engenderings! Paulina, wife of Saturninus, a matron of high repute in Rome, thinking to lie with the god Serapis, finds herself in the arms of a lover of hers, by the connivance of the priests of that temple.[3] (*c*) Varro, the most subtle and most learned Latin author, in his books on Theology, writes that the sacristan of the temple of Hercules, throwing dice with one hand for himself and with the other for Hercules, staked against him a supper and a wench: if he won, it was at the cost of the offerings; if he lost, at his own expense. Losing, he paid for the supper and the wench. Her name was Laurentina, who saw this god in her arms at night, telling her, besides, that the first man whom she met the next day would pay her her wage in divine fashion. This was Taruntius, a rich young man, who took her home to his house and in time made her his heiress. She, in her turn, hoping to do a thing agreeable to that god, made the Roman people her heir; consequently divine honours were given to her.[4] As if it were not sufficient that Plato was originally descended in a double line from the gods and had Neptune for the common progenitor of his race, it was held for certain at Athens that Aristo, having desired to enjoy the fair Periction, was unable to do so, and was warned in a dream by the god Apollo to leave her undefiled and untouched until she had been brought to bed; these were the father and mother of Plato.[5] How many instances are there in history of such cuckoldries practised by the gods upon

[1] That is, the Divinity.

[2] *Consultez en, pour voir, avec vostre astrolabe.*

[3] See Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, XVIII, 4. The god named in the tale is Anubis, not Serapis.

[4] See St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, VI, 7. The story is told somewhat differently by Plutarch in the *Life of Romulus*.

[5] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Plato*.

poor mortals, and of husbands contumeliously discredited in favour of the children! The followers of Mahomet believe that [1] there are numerous Merlins, that is to say, fatherless children, born of the spirit, divinely conceived in the wombs of virgins; and they bear a name which in their tongue signifies this.[2]

(*b*) It is to be observed that nothing is more cherished and more highly prized by every creature than its own being (*c*) (the lion, the eagle, the dolphin account nothing more highly than their kind [3]); (*b*) and that each one compares the qualities of all other things with its own qualities, which we can indeed conceive to be expanded and contracted, but that is all; for beyond this comparison and this faculty [4] our imagination can not go, nor can it divine any thing different; and it is impossible for the mind to go outside of this and to pass beyond it. (*c*) Thence were derived these ancient conclusions: Of all forms, the most beautiful is that of man; consequently God is of that form. No one can be happy without virtue, nor can virtue exist without reason, or reason dwell elsewhere than in the human shape; consequently God is invested with the human shape.[5] *Ita est informatum, anticipatum mentibus nostris ut homini, cum de deo cogitet, forma occurrat humana.*[6] (*b*) Because of this, Xenophanes said, jestingly, that if animals fashion gods for themselves, as it is probable that they do, they certainly fashion them like themselves, and magnify themselves, as we do.[7] For why should not a gosling say this: "All the parts of the universe concern me; the earth serves me to walk upon, the sun to give me light, the stars to breathe into me their influences; I have a certain benefit from the winds, another from the waters; there is nothing that the vault of heaven regards with such favour as it does me; I am the darling of nature; is it not man who maintains

[1] *En la religion de Mahomet, il se treuve, par le creance de ce peuple.*

[2] See Guillaume Postel, *Histoire des Turcs.*

[3] See Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, I, 27.

[4] *Hors de ce raport et de ce principe.*

[5] See *Ibid.*, I, 18.

[6] Our minds are so made and prepossessed that when a man thinks of God, the human form presents itself to him. — *Ibid.*, 27.

[7] See Eusebius, *Evangelical Preparation*, XIII, 13.

me, who houses me, who waits upon me? it is for me that he sows and grinds; if he eats me, so does he his fellow man, and so do I the worms that kill him and eat him"? As much might a crane say, and even more proudly, for the freedom of his flight and the possession of that fair and lofty region; (*c*) *tam blanda conciliatrix et tam sui est lena ipsa natura!*[1]

(*b*) So now, in this same way, for us are the fates, for us the world; the light and the thunder are for us; both the creator and the created, all is for us. This is the goal and the mark at which the universality of things aims. Look at the record of celestial affairs that philosophy has kept for two thousand years and more: the gods have acted, have spoken only for man; it attributes to them no other subject of consultation, no other vocation. Here they are against us in war, —

> domitosque Herculea manu
> Telluris juvenes, unde periculum
> Fulgens contremuit domus
> Saturni veteris;[2]

here they are partakers of our troubles, (*c*) to pay us in kind because we have so many times been partakers of theirs.

> (*b*) Neptunus muros magnoque emota tridenti
> Fundamenta quatit, totamque a sedibus urbem
> Eruit. Hic Juno Scæas sævissima portas
> Prima tenet.[3]

(*c*) The Caunians, from zeal for the supremacy of their own gods, arm themselves on their day of worship and go over their whole domain, striking the air here and there with their swords, thus hotly pursuing and expelling foreign gods from their territory.[4] (*b*) The powers of the gods are limited ac-

[1] So flattering a go-between is Nature herself, and, as it were, a procuress to her children. — Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, I, 27.

[2] The earth-born youths subdued by the hand of Hercules, they from whom the resplendent mansion of old Saturn dreaded danger. — Horace, *Odes*, II, 12.6.

[3] Neptune with his powerful trident shakes the walls and the foundations, and overturns the whole city from its seat; yonder, Juno, most terrible, is the first to hold the Scæan gate. — Virgil, *Æneid*, II, 610.

[4] See Herodotus, I, 172.

cording to our need: this one cures horses, that one, men; one the plague, one the scurvy, another the cough; (*c*) one, one sort of itch, one a different sort (*adeo minimis etiam rebus prava religio inserit deos*[1]); (*b*) this one causes grapes to grow, that one, garlic; one has lechery in charge, one merchandise (*c*) (for each class of artisans, a god); one has his province and his renown in the east, another in the west:

hic illius arma,
Hic currus fuit.[2]

(*c*) *O sancte Apollo, qui umbilicum certum terrarum obtines!* [3]

Pallada Cecropidæ, Minoïa Creta Dianam,
Vulcanum tellus Hipsipilea colit,
Junonem Sparte Pelopeiadesque Mycenæ;
Pinigerum Fauni Mænalis ora caput;
Mars Latio venerandus.[4]

(*b*) This one has but one town, or one family, as his possession; (*c*) that one lives alone, another in company, either voluntarily or of necessity.

Junctaque sunt magno templa nepotis avo.[5]

(*b*) There are some so poor and powerless [6] (for the number of them reaches to thirty-six thousand) that it needs five or six combined to produce a blade of wheat, and they derive from it their various names:[7] (*c*) there are three for one door — he of the boards, he of the hinges, he of the threshold;[8] four for one child — guardians of his swaddling-

[1] So does superstition connect the gods with the most trifling things. — Livy, XXVII, 23.

[2] There were her arms, there her chariot. — Virgil, *Æneid*, I, 16.

[3] O divine Apollo, who certainly dost govern the navel of the earth [Delphi]. — Cicero, *De Div.*, II, 56.

[4] The Cecropides [Athenians] worship Pallas; Crete, of Minos, Diana; the dwellers in the land where Hypsipyle reigned [Lemnos], Vulcan; Sparta and Mycenæ, home of the descendants of Pelops, Juno; the heights of Mænalis, Faunus [Pan], with his pine-crowned head; Mars was adored in Latium. — Ovid, *Fasti*, III, 81.

[5] And the temples of the grandson are joined to that of his mighty ancestor. — *Ibid.*, I, 294.

[6] *Populaires*.

[7] See St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, IV, 8.

[8] See *Ibid.*, and VI, 7.

clothes, of his drinking, of his eating, of his nursing;[1] some about whom there is no question,[2] some uncertain and doubtful; some who do not yet enter paradise, —

Quos quoniam cœli nondum dignamur honore,
Quas dedimus certe terras habitare sinamus.[3]

There are among them physicians, poets, statesmen;[4] some of them are midway between divine and human nature, intercessors, intermediaries between ourselves and God; adored with a sort of secondary and diminished order of adoration; there are infinite titles and offices; some good, some evil. (*b*) Some of them are old and worn out,[5] and some of them are mortal; for Chrysippus believed that, in the final conflagration of the world, all the gods would perish save Jupiter.[6] (*c*) Man fabricates a thousand agreeable associations between God and himself. Is he not his compatriot?

Jovis incunabula Creten.[7]

This is the excuse that Scævola, a great pontiff, and Varro, a great theologian, gave us in their day, when considering this subject: that it is needful that the people be ignorant of many true things and believe many false things;[8] *cum veritatem qua liberetur, inquirat, credatur ei expedire quod fallitur.*[9] (*b*) Human eyes can not perceive things save by the forms with which they are acquainted. (*c*) And we do not remember the downfall of the unhappy Phaëton for having attempted to manage the reins of his father's horses with a mortal hand. Our mind drops down to as great a depth, and is shattered and crushed in like manner through its temerity. (*b*) If you ask philosophy of what substance consist

[1] See St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, IV, *passim.*

[2] *Aucuns certeins.* See *Ibid.*, III, 12.

[3] Whom, since we do not judge them yet worthy of heavenly honours, we at least permit to inhabit the countries that we have given them. — Ovid, *Metam.*, I, 194.

[4] *Civils.* See St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, VI, 5.

[5] In 1588: *Il en est de jeunes et fleurissans.*

[6] See Plutarch, *Common conceptions against the Stoics.*

[7] Crete, the cradle of Jove. — Ovid, *Metam.*, VIII, 99.

[8] See St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, IV, 31 and 27.

[9] Since he seeks the truth in order that he may be free, it is thought expedient for him to be in error. — See *Ibid.*, 31.

the sky and the sun, what will it answer, if not of iron, or, with Anaxagoras, of stone,[1] or some such matter that we use? (*c*) Does some one enquire of Zeno what nature is? A fire, he says, artificial, apt to engender, proceeding according to rule.[2] (*b*) Archimedes, the master of that science which claims for itself preëminence over others in truth and certainty, says: The sun is a god of red-hot iron. Is not this a fine conception, resulting from the beauty and necessary employment[3] of geometrical demonstration! Not, however, so necessary (*c*) and useful that Socrates did not consider that it was sufficient to know enough of it to be able to measure the ground that one gave and received,[4] and (*b*) that Poliænus, who had been a famous and illustrious teacher of it, did not, after he had tasted the sweet fruit of the lazy gardens of Epicurus, hold them in contempt as being full of falsity and manifest emptiness.[5]

(*c*) Socrates, who was esteemed in ancient days to be wise above all other men in matters celestial and divine, says in Xenophon, touching this proposition of Anaxagoras, that he had disturbed his brain, like all men who delve immoderately into branches of knowledge which do not appertain to them. As to his representing the sun as a red-hot stone, he did not reflect that a stone does not glow in fire, and, what is worse, that it is consumed by it; as to his representing the sun and fire as the same, that fire does not turn black those whom it shines upon; that we can look unblinking at fire; that fire kills plants and grasses.[6] In the opinion of Socrates, and in mine also, the wisest way to judge of things above is not to judge of them at all. Plato having in the *Timæus* to speak of divinities, "This is an undertaking," he says, "which goes beyond our scope; those men of old times are to be believed, who said that they were begotten by them; it is contrary to reason to refuse faith to the children of the gods, although what they say be not confirmed

[1] See Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, IV, 7.7.
[2] See Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, II, 22.
[3] *Inevitable necessité.*
[4] See Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, IV, 7.2.
[5] See Cicero, *Academica*, II, 33.
[6] See Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, IV, 7.7.

by unquestionable or probable proofs, since they assure us that they speak of personal and well-known matters."[1]

(*a*) Let us see if we have a little more clearness in our knowledge of human and natural things. Is it not an absurd undertaking, for those things to which, by our own admission, our learning can not attain, to devise for them another body, and ascribe to them a false form of our invention; as is seen regarding the movements of the planets, to which, inasmuch as our mind can not reach them or conceive their natural guidance, we ascribe material, clumsy, corporeal impulsions like ours?

> temo aureus, aurea summæ
> Curvatura rotæ, radiorum argenteus ordo.[2]

You would say there had been chariot-drivers, carpenters, and painters, who had gone up on high to fashion machines of various movements (*c*) and to arrange the wheels and involutions of the heavenly bodies in diversified colours around the spindle of necessity, according to Plato.[3]

> (*b*) Mundus domus est maxima rerum,
> Quam quinque altitonæ fragmine zonæ
> Cingunt, perquam limbus pictus bis sex signis
> Stellimicantibus, altus in obliquo æthere, lunæ
> Bigas acceptat.[4]

These are all dreams and fantastic absurdities. Would that Nature might be pleased, some day, to lay open her bosom to us and make us see, as they are, the modes and guidance of her movements, and there to prepare our eyes! O God! what deceptions, what errors, we should find in our paltry learning! (*c*) I am mistaken if it apprehends a single thing rightly; and I shall depart hence more ignorant of every thing else than of my ignorance.

[1] See Plato, *Timæus*.

[2] The pole of gold, the rims of the wheels of gold, and the spokes of silver. — Ovid, *Metam.*, II, 107.

[3] See Plato, *Republic*, book X.

[4] The universe is the immense abode of all things, which five thundering zones encircle, through which a belt adorned with twice six glittering starry signs, aloft in the sloping skies, receives the two-horsed car of the moon. — Verses of Varro, quoted by Valerius Probus in his notes on Virgil's sixth *Eclogue*.

Have I not seen in Plato this divine saying, that Nature is naught but enigmatical poetry?[1] as, perhaps, one might say, a veiled and shadowed painting, gleaming with an infinite variety of false lights to employ our conjectures. *Latent ista omnia crassis occultata et circumfusa tenebris, ut nulla acies humani ingenii tanta sit, quæ penetrare in cœlum, terram intrare possit.*[2] And certainly philosophy is naught but adulterated poetry. Whence do those authors derive all their authority save from the poets? And the earliest ones were poets themselves and treated of it[3] in their art. Plato was simply an irregular poet.[4] Timon called him, by way of insult, a great fabricator of miracles.[5]

(*a*) Just as women make use of ivory teeth when their natural ones fail them, and in place of their true complexion create one of some foreign substance; as they make hips[6] of cloth and felt, and busts[7] of cotton, and in the sight and knowledge of every one embellish themselves with a false and borrowed beauty; so does learning (*b*) (and even our law, they say, has legal fictions upon which it bases the truth of its justice): (*a*) it gives us as satisfaction and presupposition the things which, as itself teaches us, have been invented; for these eccentric and concentric epicycles, with which Astrology aids herself in disposing the revolutions of the stars, it[8] gives us as the best that it has been able to devise on that subject; as also, for that matter, philosophy offers us, not what is or what she believes, but what she fabricates that has the most probability and attractiveness. (*c*) Plato says, in his discourse on the nature of the human body and that of beasts: That what we have said is true, we should be assured if we had thereon the confirmation of

[1] See Plato, *Second Alcibiades*. Montaigne misread this passage, the sense of which is that all poetry is enigmatical.

[2] All these things are hidden and surrounded by thick shadows, so that no human mind is keen enough to penetrate the sky or the interior of the earth. — Cicero, *Academica*, II, 39.

[3] Of philosophy.

[4] *Un poete descousu.*

[5] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Plato*. In place of this last sentence, 1595 has: *Toutes les sciences sur-humaines s'accoustrent du stile poetique.*

[6] *Des cuisses.*

[7] *De l'embonpoinct.*

[8] That is, learning.

a divine voice; we are only sure that it is the likeliest that we can say.[1]

(*a*) It is not to the skies alone that she[2] sends her ropes, her machines, and her wheels. Consider a little what she says of ourselves and our frame-work. There is not more retrogradation, trepidation, accession, recession, readjustment,[3] in the stars and heavenly bodies than they[4] have fashioned for this poor little human body. Truly they have thence had reason to call this the Little World,[5] so many fragments and forms have they employed to lay its walls and build it.[6] In order to arrange the movements they see in man, the diverse functions and faculties that we feel in ourselves, into how many parts have they divided our souls; lodged it in how many places; in how many ranks and degrees have they disposed this poor man in addition to natural and visible ones; and assigned him how many offices and vocations! They make of him an imaginary republic. It is a subject that they hold to and work over; they are given full power to pull him to pieces, arrange, reconstruct, and fill him out, each one according to his fancy; and still they do not possess him. Not only in reality, but even in imagination, they can not so order it that there is not some cadence or some note that eludes their architecture, quite abnormal as it is, and pieced out with a thousand false and fantastic bits. (*c*) And it is not reasonable to excuse them. For we pardon painters, when they paint the sky, the earth, seas, mountains, scattered islands, for putting before us only some slight indication thereof, and are content with a sort of shadow and suggestion, as of things not known; but when they draw for us from life any subject which is familiar to us and well known, we require of them a perfect and exact reproduction of lineaments and colours, and despise them if they fail in this.[7]

[1] See Plato, *Timæus*. These sentences follow a passage concerning the nature of the soul, about a third from the end.

[2] That is, philosophy.

[3] *Ravissement = ravisement.*

[4] That is, the philosophers.

[5] That is, Microcosmos.

[6] *Tant ils ont employé de pieces et de visages à le maçonner et bastir.*

[7] Imitated from Plato, *Critias*.

(*a*) I am much pleased with the Milesian maid who, seeing the philosopher Thales continually occupied in contemplation of the celestial vault, and [seeing] that his eyes were ever raised upward, placed in his path something to make him stumble, to warn him that it would be time to occupy his thoughts with things that were in the clouds when he had taken heed to those that were at his feet.[1] She surely gave him good counsel — to look at himself rather than at the heavens. (*c*) For, as Democritus says through the mouth of Cicero, —

> Quod est ante pedes, nemo spectat; cœli scrutantur plagas.[2]

(*a*) But it is inherent in our condition that knowledge of what we have in our hands is as far removed from us and as embosomed in clouds, as is that of the stars. (*c*) As Socrates says in Plato, he who takes part in philosophy can be reproached as that woman reproached Thales, for that he sees nothing of what is before him. For every philosopher is ignorant of what his neighbour is doing, aye, and of what he himself is doing, and knows not what they both are, whether beasts or men.[3]

(*a*) Those persons who find Sebond's arguments too weak, who are ignorant of nothing, who oversee the world, who know every thing, —

> Quæ mare compescant causæ; quid temperet annum;
> Stellæ sponte sua jussæve vagentur et errent;
> Quid premat obscurum Lunæ, quid proferat orbem;
> Quid velit et possit rerum concordia discors,[4] —

[1] See Plato, *Theætetus;* Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Thales.*

[2] No one contemplates what is at his feet; they explore the expanse of the sky. — Quoted by Cicero, *De Div.*, II, 13, from a tragedy of Ennius. Montaigne mistakes the meaning of the passage: it is not Democritus who says this; but Cicero is blaming Democritus for wasting time on insoluble questions.

[3] See Plato, *Theætetus.*

[4] What causes control the sea; what regulates the course of the year; whether the stars move and wander at their own will or by command; what hides the darkened orb of the moon, and what makes it reappear; what is the meaning and what the power of the discordant harmony of nature. — Horace, *Epistles*, I, 12.16.

did they not sometimes, amidst their books, feel the difficulties that present themselves in understanding their own being? We see well that the finger is moved and that the foot is moved; that some parts stir of themselves without our leave, and that other parts we excite by our direction; that a certain sort of apprehension causes flushing, a certain other sort, pallor; one imagination works upon the spleen only, another on the brain; one causes laughter, another weeping; a different one appals and benumbs all our faculties and arrests the movement of our limbs. (*c*) By one object the stomach is disturbed, by another an organ lower down. (*a*) But how a mental impression can so deeply pierce into a compact and solid subject, and the nature of the connection and meeting of these admirable springs of action, no man has ever known, as Solomon says.[1] (*c*) *Omnia incerta ratione et in naturæ majestate abdita*,[2] says Pliny; and St. Augustine: *Modus quo corporibus adhærent spiritus, omnino mirus est, nec comprehendi ab homine potest; et hoc ipse homo est.*[3] (*a*) And yet no one questions it; for the opinions of men are received in continuance of ancient beliefs, by authority and on credit, as if it were a matter of religion and law. We receive as incomprehensible [4] what is commonly held about this matter; we accept this truth, with all its structure and belongings of arguments and proofs, as a firm and solid body, which is no more to be shaken, which is no more to be judged. On the contrary, every one, as best he can, plasters up and strengthens this received belief with all that can be done by the reason, which is a flexible, easily directed tool and adaptable to every form. Thus is the world filled with vapidity and steeped in falsehood. That which causes few things to be questioned is that mere impressions are never tested by us; we never dig to the root, where the mistake and the weakness lie: we argue only about the branches; we do

[1] The last three words were omitted in the *Édition Municipale* and in 1595.

[2] All these things are inscrutable to human reason. — Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, II, 37.

[3] The manner in which spirit and body adhere to each other is altogether wonderful and can not be understood by man; and this union constitutes man himself. — St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, XXI, 10.

[4] *Comme un jargon.*

not ask if such a thing is true, but whether it has been thus, or so, understood. We do not ask whether Galen said any thing worth while, but whether he said this, or something else.

Truly it was within reason that this curbing and restraint of the freedom of our judgement, and this tyranny of our beliefs, should be extended even to the schools and the arts. The god of scholastic learning is Aristotle: it is a matter of religion to discuss his decrees, as it was those of Lycurgus at Sparta. His teaching, which is perchance as false as another, is taken by us as supreme law. I know not why I should not accept as readily either the ideas of Plato, or the atoms of Epicurus, or the fulness and emptiness of Leucippus and Democritus, or the water of Thales, or the infinitude of nature of Anaximander, or the air of Diogenes,[1] or the numbers and symmetry of Pythagoras, or the infinite of Parmenides, or the unity of Musæus, or the water and fire of Apollodorus, or the resembling parts of Anaxagoras, or the discord and concord of Empedocles, or the fire of Heraclitus, or any other opinion in that endless confusion of judgements and sayings which this fine human reason brings forth by its certainty and clearness of sight about every thing into which it enters, as I should the opinion of Aristotle on this subject of the ultimate bases of natural things; which bases he builds up from three points — matter, form, and privation. For what can be more idle than to make vacuity itself the cause of the production of things? Privation is something negative; by what kind of thought [2] can he have made it the cause and origin of things that exist? Yet this no one would venture to question, except as an exercise in logic. It is in no wise discussed to cast doubt upon it, but to defend the founder of the school from foreign criticisms; his authority is the boundary outside which it is not permitted to investigate.

It is very easy to build upon admitted postulates what one will; for, according to the law and ordering of this beginning, the other parts of the building are easily carried

[1] The reference is to Diogenes Apolloniates. See *supra*, p. 284, note 4.

[2] *De quelle humeur.*

on in harmony. In this way we find our reasoning well grounded, and we discourse on a safe footing; for our masters pre-occupy and gain beforehand in our belief all the room they need to reach the conclusion they desire; in the manner of the geometricians, with their granted demands; the assent and approval that we lend them giving them the means to lead us hither and yon and to whirl us about at their pleasure. Whosoever is believed in his presuppositions, he is our master and our God; he will lay the plan of his foundations so full and so easy to follow that through them he will be able to raise us, if he will, to the clouds.

In this dealing and traffic in learning, we have taken for current coin the saying of Pythagoras, that every skilful man ought to be believed about his art.[1] The dialectician applies to the grammarian for the meaning of words; the rhetorician borrows from the dialectician the arrangement of arguments; the poet, his measures from the musician; the geometrician, his proportions from the arithmetician; the metaphysicians take for their foundation the conjectures of physics. For every science has its admitted principles, by which human judgement is held in check on all sides. If you run up against this barrier, wherein the main error[2] lies, they have at once this saying in their mouths, that there is no arguing with those who deny the first principles.[3] Now, there can be no knowledge of the origin of men[4] if the Divinity has not revealed it to them; of all the rest, both the beginning and the middle and the end, there is naught but visions and smoke. For those who contend by presuppositions, it is necessary to presuppose, on the other side, the very axiom under discussion. Because every human presupposition and every proposition has as much authority as every other,[5] unless reasoning shows the distinction. So we must put them all in the scales; and in the first place, the general ones, and those that domineer over us. (*c*) The impression of certainty is a certain proof of unwisdom and

[1] See Cornelius Agrippa, *Of the uncertainty and vanity of learning.*
[2] In 1580 to 1588: *la principale foiblesse et fausseté.*
[3] See C. Agrippa, *Of the uncertainty and vanity of learning.*
[4] *Or n'y peut avoir des principes aux hommes.*
[5] That is, in their eyes.

extreme uncertainty; and there are no more unwise or less philosophical persons than Plato's philodoxes.[1] (*a*) We must learn if fire be hot, if snow be white, if there be any thing hard or soft within our cognisance. And as for those answers about which old tales were made, as to him who questioned the existence of heat, who was told that he should throw himself into the fire; to him who denied the coldness of ice, that he should put some into his bosom — these are wholly unworthy the profession of philosophy. If they had left us in our natural condition, accepting external seemings according as they presented themselves to us through our senses, and had let us go on according to our simple sensations, regulated by the condition of our inheritance, they would be in the right to speak thus; but it is from them that we have learned to make ourselves judges of the world; it is from them that we derive this fanciful idea that the human reason is controller-general of all that is without and within the vault of heaven; that it embraces every thing; that it can do every thing; by its means every thing is learned and known. Such answer would be appropriate among the Cannibals, who enjoy the good fortune of a long, tranquil, and peaceful life, without the precepts of Aristotle and with no knowledge of the name of physics. Such an answer would, perchance, be worth more and would have more force than all those that they [2] may borrow from their reason and their imagination. That answer would fit,[3] with ourselves, all the animals and all things over which the law of nature still has pure and simple control; but they [4] have abandoned it. They are forbidden to say to me: "It is true, for you so see it and feel it"; they are obliged to teach me whether what I think I feel I do really feel; and if I do feel it, they must then tell me why I feel it, and how, and what it is; they must tell me the name, the origin, the metes and bounds of heat and cold, the quality of that which acts and which suffers; or else, let them forsake their profession,

[1] That is, those who love their own opinions. See Plato, *Republic*, end of book V.

[2] That is, philosophers.

[3] *De cette-cy feroient capables.*

[4] That is, philosophers.

which is to admit or believe nothing save by the way of the reason: that is their touchstone for all sorts of tests; but certainly it is a touchstone full of falsity, error, weakness, and defection.

In what way do we think we can best make trial of her? [1] Will it not be by herself? If we can not trust her when speaking of herself, she will hardly be fit to judge of external things; if she is acquainted with any thing, at the least it will be with her own self and her domicile. She is in the soul, and is a part or a product thereof; while the true and essential reason, whose purloined name we use under false colours, dwells in God's bosom; there is her habitation and her refuge; it is thence that she comes when it pleases God to show us some ray from her, as Pallas issued from her father's head to have intercourse with the world.

Now let us see what human reason has taught us of herself and of the soul; (*c*) not of the universal soul, in which almost all philosophy makes the heavenly bodies and the primal bodies participants; nor of that which Thales attributed even to the things that are regarded as inanimate, induced by consideration of the magnet,[2] but of that which belongs to us, which we ought to know better.

(*b*) Ignoratur enim quæ sit natura animaï,
Nata sit, an contra nascentibus insinuetur,
Et simul intereat nobiscum morte dirempta,
An tenebras Orci visat vastasque lacunas,
An pecudes alias divinitus insinuet se.[3]

(*a*) It taught Crates and Dicæarchus that there was no soul at all, but that the body was moved by a natural impulse; [4]

[1] That is, of the reason.

[2] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Thales*.

[3] For they can not tell what is the nature of the soul: whether it is born with the body, or, on the contrary, finds its way into men at their birth; whether it perishes together with us, when severed from us by death, or goes to the dark and vast pools of Orcus, or, by divine decree, enters the body of an animal. — Lucretius, I, 112.

[4] The following opinions come for the most part from Sextus Empiricus (*Hypot.*), Cicero (*Academica*, and, especially, *Tusc. Disp.*, I, 10), Plutarch (*The Opinions of Philosophers*), Lactantius, etc. But Montaigne certainly took them at second-hand from lists in the works of his contemporaries.

Plato, that it was a substance impelled by itself; Thales, an unresting nature; Asclepiades, an exercitation of the senses; Hesiod and Anaximander, a thing composed of earth and water; Parmenides, of earth and fire; Empedocles, of blood,

Sanguineam vomit ille animam; [1]

Possidonius, Cleanthes, and Galen, a certain heat or ardent temperament, —

Igneus est ollis vigor, et cœlestis origo; [2]

Hippocrates, a spirit diffused through the body; Varro, an air inhaled through the mouth, warmed by the lungs, tempered in the heart, and diffused through the whole body; Zeno, the quintessence of the four elements; Heraclides Ponticus, the light; Xenocrates and the Egyptians, a varying number; the Chaldæans, a power without definite form;

(*b*) habitum quemdam vitalem corporis esse,
Harmoniam Græci quam dicunt.[3]

(*a*) Let us not forget Aristotle's belief, that the soul is that which by its nature causes the body to move, which he calls *entelechy;* as lifeless a conception as any other, for he speaks neither of the essence, nor the origin, nor the nature of the soul, but observes solely its effect. (*c*) Lactantius, Seneca, and the better part of (*a*) the dogmatists confessed that it was a thing that they did not understand. (*c*) And after enumerating all these opinions, *Harum sententiarum quæ vera sit, deus aliquis viderit,*[4] says Cicero. (*a*) "I know by myself," says St. Bernard, "how incomprehensible God is, since I can not comprehend the parts of my own being." [5] (*c*) Heraclitus, who held that the universe was full of souls

[1] He vomits forth his soul of blood. — Virgil, *Æneid*, IX, 349. The original is: *Purpuream vomit ille animam et cum sanguine mixta, Vina refert moriens* — describing the death of Rhetus. It is difficult to perceive the aptness of this quotation, in any sense.

[2] They have a fiery strength and a celestial source. — *Ibid.*, VI, 730.

[3] A certain vital state of the body, which the Greeks call *harmonia*. — Lucretius, III, 99.

[4] Which of all these opinions may be true, some god must decide. — Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, I, 11.

[5] See St. Bernard, *Liber de anima*, near the beginning.

and spirits,[1] maintained that it is not possible to go so far in knowledge of the soul as to reach it, so secret is its essence.[2]

(*a*) There is no less disagreement and discussion about its location. Hippocrates and Hierophilus place it in the ventricle of the brain; Democritus and Aristotle, everywhere in the body;

(*b*) Ut bona sæpe valetudo cum dicitur esse
Corporis, et non est tamen hæc pars ulla valentis; [3]

(*a*) Epicurus, in the stomach;

(*b*) Hic exultat enim pavor ac metus, hæc loca circum
Lætitiæ mulcent;[4]

(*a*) the Stoics, round about and within the heart; Erasistratus, adjoining the membrane of the epicranium; Empedocles, in the blood; as does Moses, which was the reason that he forbade eating the blood of beasts with which their soul is connected; Galen thought that each part of the body has its soul; Strato placed it between the eyebrows.[5] (*c*) *Qua facie quidem sit animus, aut ubi habitet, ne quærendum quidem est*,[6] says Cicero. I willingly leave to this man his own words. Should I desire to change the language of eloquence? Moreover, there is little profit in stealing the substance of his ideas: they are both infrequent and not at all forcible or original.[7] (*a*) But the reason why Chrysippus, like others of his school, argues that it is about the heart, should not be forgotten: "It is," he says, "because when we wish to assert something, we put our hand on the stomach; and when we desire to say ἔγω, which means *I*, we drop the lower jaw toward the stomach." [8] This passage should not be passed

[1] *Dæmons.*

[2] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Heraclitus.*

[3] Just as, when good health is said to belong to the body, and yet it is not any one part of the man in health. — Lucretius, III, 102.

[4] Here throb fear and terror; these places are soothed by joys. — *Ibid.*, 141.

[5] For all these opinions see, in addition to the sources mentioned in note 2, on p. 321, C. Agrippa, *Of the uncertainty and vanity of learning.*

[6] In truth, what is its appearance, and where it dwells, we can not seek to know. — *Tusc. Disp.*, I, 28.

[7] *Peu roides et peu ignorees.*

[8] See Galen, *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis.*

over without noting the inanity of so great a personage. For not only are these considerations in themselves infinitely trivial, but the last proves only to the Greeks that they have the soul in that region. There is no human judgement so on the stretch that it does not sometimes slumber. (*c*) What do we hesitate to say? Here are the Stoics, fathers of human wisdom, who find that the soul of a man, buried under a ruin, writhes and struggles for a long while to come forth, being unable to rid itself of the burden, like a mouse caught in a trap.[1] Some hold that the world was made in order to give bodies, by way of punishment, to spirits who have fallen, through their fault, from the purity wherein they were created; and, the first creation having been only incorporeal, according as they are more or less completely removed from their immateriality, they are more or less agreeably or burdensomely embodied.[2] From this comes the variety of so much created matter. But the spirit which was, for its punishment, invested with the body of the sun, must have a very rare and special degree of change. The limits of our enquiry all end in obscurity: as Plutarch says of the way in which histories open,[3] that after the fashion of maps the edge of the known region is occupied by swamps, dense forests, deserts, and uninhabitable places.[4] That is why the most clumsy and puerile utterances are oftenest found in those who treat of the highest and most remote things, they being utterly undone by [5] their curiosity and presumption. The end and the beginning of knowledge are equally possessed by ignorance.[6] (*a*) See how Plato (*c*) takes flight into his poetic clouds. See how he uses the language of the gods.[7] But of what was he thinking when (*a*) he defined man as an animal with two feet, without feathers, affording to those who desired to make sport of

[1] See Seneca, *Epistle* 57.7.

[2] This was the opinion of Origen, which Montaigne took from St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, XI, 23, and especially from the *Commentary* of Vivès.

[3] *Come dict Plutarque de la teste des histoires.*

[4] See Plutarch, *Life of Theseus.*

[5] *S'abismant en.*

[6] *Se tiennent en pareille bestise.*

[7] *Voyes chez lui le jargon des dieux.*

him an amusing opportunity; for, having plucked a live capon, they styled it "a man according to Plato." [1]

And how about the Epicureans? With what ignorance did they first imagine that their atoms, which, they said, were bodies having some weight and a natural downward movement, had built the world; until they were shown by their adversaries, that with that description it was not possible that these atoms should join and cling to one another, their fall being thus straight and perpendicular, and producing everywhere parallel lines. Wherefore there was need that they should afterward add to them a haphazard lateral motion, and that they should also supply their atoms with curved and hooked tails, to make them fitted to unite and fasten themselves together.[2] (*c*) And even then, do not they who follow them [3] up about this other suggestion, give them trouble? If the atoms have by chance formed so many varieties of figure, why has it never happened to them to make a house or a shoe? Why, in the same way, may we not believe that an infinite number of Greek letters, scattered in the market-place, might attain the contexture of the *Iliad?* [4] That which is capable of reason, said Zeno, is better than that which is not capable thereof; there is nothing better than the world; so it is capable of reason.[5] Cotta, by this same line of argument, makes the world mathematical; and he makes it musical and organical by the other line of argument, also from Zeno: "The whole is more than a part; we are capable of wisdom and are parts of the world; therefore it is wise." [6]

(*a*) In the reproaches which the philosophers address to one another touching the dissensions in their opinions and their sects,[7] there are numberless like examples of argu-

[1] *L'homme de Platon.* See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Diogenes.*

[2] "Pour toute cette critique de la physique épicurienne, cf. le *De Fin.*, I, et le *Commentaire* de Lucrèce par Lambin, *passim.*" — M. Villey.

[3] The Epicureans.

[4] See Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, II, 37.

[5] See *Ibid.*, III, 9.

[6] This whole passage is taken (many sentences literally) from the *De Nat. Deor.*, II, 37, III, 9, and II, 8.

[7] In 1580 to 1588: *comme il s'en voit infinis chez Plutarque, contre les Epicuriens et Stoiciens, et en Seneque contre les Peripateticiens.*

ments, not false only, but inept, not holding together, and convicting their authors not so much of ignorance as of indiscretion. (*c*) He who should adequately bring together a collection of the stupidities of human sapience would have wonders to tell. I willingly assemble some of them to exhibit, as being, in their way, not less profitable than more tempered teachings. (*a*) Let us judge by this what should be our estimate of man, his understanding and his reason, since, in those great personages who have carried human ability to so high a point, there are found failings so manifest and so gross. For my part, I prefer to believe that they treated learning casually, like a toy of various forms, and played with reason as with a useless and trifling implement, putting forward all sorts of conceptions and fancies, sometimes more close in texture, sometimes more loose.[1]

This same Plato, who defined man as a hen, says elsewhere, after Socrates, that he does not in truth know what man is, and that he is a piece of the world as difficult as any to understand.[2] By this variety and instability of opinion they lead us tacitly, as if by the hand, to this decision of their indecision.[3] They openly confess that they do not always present their doctrine with an uncovered and visible aspect; they conceal it sometimes in the deceitful shadows of poetry, sometimes behind some other mask; for our imperfection carries this with it, that raw meat is not always suited to our stomach; it must needs be dried, changed, and spiced. They do the same: they sometimes cast a mist over their real opinions and judgements, and falsify them, to adapt them to public use. They do not choose to make express confession of ignorance and of the imbecility of human reasoning, (*c*) that they may not frighten the children; (*a*) but they show it to us plainly enough by the aspect of a confused and wavering learning.

(*b*) When in Italy, I told a person who had difficulty in speaking Italian that, if he sought only to make himself understood, without desiring in any way to excel, he might use

[1] In 1580 to 1588: *Combien de fois leur voyons nous dire des choses diverses et contraires?*

[2] See Plato, *First Alcibiades*.

[3] *A cette resolution de leur irresolution.*

only the first words that came to his lips, — Latin, French, Spanish, or Gascon, — and that, by adding the Italian termination, he would never fail to hit upon some idiom of the country, either Tuscan, or Roman, or Venetian, or Piedmontese, or Neapolitan, and to catch hold of some one of so many forms. I say the same of philosophy: it has so many aspects and so much variety, and has said so much, that all our idle dreams and delusions are found in it. Human fantasy can conceive nothing good or bad that is not there. (*c*) *Nihil tam absurde dici potest quod non dicatur ab aliquo philosophorum.*[1] (*b*) And I the more freely allow my freakish thoughts of this kind to go abroad, because, although born in my own mind and without pattern, I know that they will find themselves related to some ancient way of thinking; and there will not lack some one to say: "See whence he took it." (*c*) My opinions [2] are innate; I have not, in framing them, called to my aid any teaching. But, devoid of force as they are, when the desire has seized upon me to declare them, and, in order to send them abroad in a little more seemly guise, I have set about helping them with arguments and examples, it has been marvellous to me to find them, by mere chance, conformable to so many philosophic examples and arguments. Of what form [3] my life was, I did not learn until after it was finished and spent. A new figure: an unpremeditated and accidental philosopher!

(*a*) To return to our soul [4] — when Plato placed reason in the brain, anger in the heart, and lust in the liver, it is probable that it was an interpretation of the movements of the soul that he intended to make, rather than a division and separation of it, as of a body, into many members.[5] And the most plausible of their opinions is that it is always a soul which, by its inherent power, reasons, remembers, under-

[1] Nothing can be said so absurd that it has not been said by some one of the philosophers. — Cicero, *De Div.*, II, 58.

[2] *Mes meurs.*

[3] *Regimant.*

[4] In 1580 to 1588: (*car j'ay choisi ce seul exemple pour le plus commode à tesmoigner nostre foiblesse et vanité.*)

[5] See Plato, *Timæus;* Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Plato.* But it is probable that Montaigne took it from the first of the *Dialogues* of Guy de Brués *contre les nouveaux académiciens.*

stands, judges, desires, and exercises all its other operations through various bodily instruments, as the seaman controls his ship according to the knowledge he has of it, now tightening or slackening a rope, now hoisting the yard, or plying the oar, by one sole power guiding divers acts; and that it dwells in the brain: which appears from this — that the wounds and accidents which touch that part immediately impair the faculties of the soul; from thence it is not strange that it flows through the rest of the body, —

(*c*) medium non deserit unquam
Cœli Phœbus iter; radiis tamen omnia lustrat,[1] —

(*a*) as the sun sheds forth from the sky its light and its influences, and fills the world therewith;

Cætera pars animæ per totum dissita corpus
Paret, et ad numen mentis nomenque movetur.[2]

Some have said that there was a general soul, as it were a great body, from which all the individual souls were drawn forth, and to which they returned, constantly reblending themselves with this universal matter,[3] —

Deum namque ire per omnes
Terrasque tractusque maris cœlumque profundum;
Hinc pecudes, armenta, viros, genus omne ferarum,
Quemque sibi tenues nascentem arcessere vitas;
Scilicet huc reddi deinde, ac resoluta referri
Omnia; nec morti esse locum; [4]

others, that they were only rejoined and refastened to it; others, that they were brought forth from the divine sub-

[1] Phœbus never leaves his path in the middle of the sky; none the less, he enlightens all things with his rays. — Claudian, *De Sexto Consulatu Honorii*, V, 411.

[2] All the rest of the soul, dispersed through the whole body, obeys and moves at the will and inclination of the mind. — Lucretius, III, 143. The true reading is *momenque*, not *nomenque*.

[3] *Matière*. The scholastic use of the word.

[4] For God pervades all lands and regions of the sea and the deep sky; from him flocks and cattle and men and all kinds of wild beasts derive the subtle breath of life when they are born; and to him it returns in the dissolution of their bodies; and there is no room for death. — Virgil, *Georgics*, IV, 221.

stance; others, by the angels, from fire and air. Some believed that they were created at the beginning of all things; [1] some, at the very hour they were needed. Some think that they descend from the full of the moon,[2] and return thither; the generality of the ancients, that they are begotten from father to son, in the same way and process as all other natural things, deducing this from the resemblance of children to their fathers, —

> Instillata patris virtus tibi; [3]
> Fortes creantur fortibus et bonis,[4] —

and that there are seen to pass from fathers to children, not only the marks of the body, but also a resemblance of humours, of dispositions, and of tendencies of the soul;

> Denique cur acris violentia triste leonum
> Seminium sequitur; dolus vulpibus, et fuga cervis
> A patribus datur, et patrius pavor incitat artus;
> Si non, certa suo quia semine seminioque
> Vis animi pariter crescit cum corpore toto? [5]

that on this basis rests divine justice, punishing in the children the sin of the fathers, forasmuch as the contagion of the paternal vices is in some degree stamped upon the souls of the children, and the disorder of their fathers' will affects them.[6] Moreover, that if souls came otherwise than in a natural course, and if they had been something else outside the body, they would have remembrance of their primal being, considering the native faculties which belong to them, of examining, reasoning, and remembering;

[1] *Aucuns, de toute ancienneté.*

[2] *Du rond de la lune.*

[3] Thy father's virtue is instilled in thee. — Source unknown.

[4] Strong men are begotten strong and good. — Horace, *Odes*, IV, 4. 29.

[5] Finally, why does untamed fierceness belong to the surly brood of lions? Why is cunning to the fox, and proneness to flight to the deer, given from their fathers, why engendered by inheritance, if not because a fixed power of mind, derived from its proper seed and breed, grows up together with the whole body? — Lucretius, III, 741–743, 746, 747.

[6] See Plutarch, *Why divine justice sometimes postpones the punishment of evil deeds.*

(*b*) si in corpus nascentibus insinuatur,
Cur superante actam ætatem meminisse nequimus,
Nec vestigia gestarum rerum ulla tenemus? [1]

(*a*) To estimate the condition of our souls from this point of view,[2] we must presuppose them all to have knowledge when they are in their native simplicity and purity. Consequently, they, being exempt from the prison of the body, would have been, before entering it, such as we hope they will be after issuing forth from it. And this knowledge they would necessarily still remember while in the body; as Plato said, that what we learn was but a remembrance of what we had previously known: [3] a thing which every one, by experience, can maintain to be false: in the first place, precisely because we remember [4] only what we are taught; and if the memory performed her due office, at least she would suggest to us something beyond our learning.[5] In the second place, what the soul knew when in her purity was true knowledge, apprehending things as they are by her divine intelligence; whereas here she is obliged to accept falsehood and error [6] if instructed in them. In which matters she can not employ reminiscence, such idea and conception having never had lodgement in her. To say that the prison of the body so suffocates her native faculties that they are all extinguished is entirely opposed to that other belief, which admits her powers to be so great, and those of her workings which men are conscious of in this life to be so admirable, that therefrom has been inferred her divinity and eternity in the past, and immortality to come.

(*b*) Nam, si tantopere est animi mutata potestas
Omnis ut actarum exciderit retinentia rerum,
Non, ut opinor, ea ab leto jam longior errat.[7]

[1] If the soul makes its way into the body at the time of birth, why are we unable to remember the time already gone, and why do we retain no traces of past actions? — Lucretius, III, 671.

[2] *Comme nous voulons.*

[3] See Plato, *Phædo*, XVIII.

[4] That is, while in the body.

[5] *Outre l'aprentissage.*

[6] *Le vice.*

[7] For, if the power of the mind is so completely changed that it has lost all memory of past things, that, methinks, differs not widely from death. — Lucretius, III, 674.

(*a*) Furthermore, it is here, with us, and not elsewhere, that the faculties and the acts of the soul must be considered; all the rest of her perfections are for her vain and useless; it is her present condition that all her immortality must register and recognise, and it is man's life only for which she must account. It would be injustice to have diminished her resources and her powers, to have disarmed her, and then, from the time of her captivity and her imprisonment, her weakness and sickness, — the time when she was under duress and constraint, — to pass sentence and a condemnation of infinite and perpetual duration, and to dwell on the consideration of so brief a time, which is perchance only an hour or two, or, at the most, a century (which, compared with infinity, is no more than an instant), in order from that momentary interval to decree and establish definitively her whole existence. It would be an iniquitous disproportion, to receive an everlasting recompense as a consequence of so short a life. (*c*) Plato, to escape this undesirable result, has future remunerations limited to a hundred years, relatively to the length of human life; [1] and many of our own writers have assigned temporal limits to them. (*a*) Thus they judged that the generation of the soul followed the common condition of human things; as, also, her life, according to the opinion of Epicurus and Democritus (which was most received), based upon these plausible signs: [2] that she was seen to be born when the body was able to contain her; that her powers were seen to mount like those of the body; that there was recognised in her the feebleness of her youth and, with time, her vigour and her maturity; and then her decline and her old age, and finally her decrepitude: —

> gigni pariter cum corpore, et una
> Crescere sentimus, pariterque senescere mentem.[3]

They [4] perceived her to be capable of various sufferings and agitated by many painful emotions, whence she sank into

[1] See Plato, *Republic*, book X.

[2] *Ces bonnes apparences.*

[3] We perceive that the mind is begotten with the body, and grows up with it, and becomes old with it. — Lucretius, III, 445.

[4] That is, the philosophers.

lassitude and grief; capable of trouble and change, of vivacity, of dulness, and of languour, subject to her special maladies and to injuries, like the stomach or the foot;

(*b*) mentem sanari, corpus ut ægrum
Cernimus, et flecti medicina posse videmus;[1]

(*a*) blinded and confused by the power of wine; shaken from her position by the vapours of a burning fever; put to sleep by the use of some medicaments and excited by others:

(*b*) corpoream naturam animi esse necesse est,
Corporeis quoniam telis ictuque laborat.[2]

(*a*) It was seen that all her faculties were benumbed and overthrown by the mere bite of a sick dog, and that there was in her no stability of reason so great, no competence, no courage, no philosophic resolution, no putting forth of her strength, that could exempt her from subjection to such mishaps; the slaver of a common cur, dropped on the hand of Socrates, could unsettle all his wisdom and all his great and so-well-ordered conceptions, could annihilate them to such a degree, that there would remain no trace of his former knowledge, —

(*b*) vis . . . animaï
Conturbatur et . . . divisa seorsum
Disjectatur, eodem illo distracta veneno,[3] —

(*a*) and that poison would find no more resistance in his soul than in that of a four-year-old child; it is a poison capable of rendering all philosophy, were she incarnate, insane and witless; for instance, Cato, so stiff-necked about death itself and destiny,[4] would have been overwhelmed with terror and affright at the sight of a mirrour or of water, if, from contact with a mad dog, he had fallen into the disease that physicians call hydrophobia:

[1] We perceive that the mind is cured, like the sick body, and we see that it can be altered by medicine. — Lucretius, III, 510.

[2] The nature of the soul must be bodily, since it suffers from bodily weapons and blows. — *Ibid.*, 175.

[3] The powers of the soul are disordered and forced asunder and torn to pieces by that same poison. — *Ibid.*, 499.

[4] *Qui tordoit le col à la mort mesme et à la fortune.*

(*b*) vis morbi distracta per artus
Turbat agens animam, spumantes æquore salso
Ventorum ut validis fervescunt viribus undæ.[1]

(*a*) Now, as to this particular, philosophy has well armed mankind for the enduring of all other mishaps, either with patience, or, if that is too hard to find, with an infallible evasion, by stealing wholly away from sensation; [2] but these are methods which are at the service of a soul in command of itself and its forces, capable of reasoning and of deliberation; not possible in that misfortune when the soul of a philosopher becomes the soul of a mad man, confused, overthrown, and past hope of recovery, which several causes may bring about: such as a too violent excitement which, by some strong passion, the soul may engender in herself, or a wound in a certain part of the person, or a fume from the stomach producing giddiness and whirling of the brain:

(*b*) morbis in corporis, avius errat
Sæpe animus; dementit enim, deliraque fatur;
Interdumque gravi lethargo fertur in altum
Æternumque soporem, oculis nutuque cadenti.[3]

(*a*) The philosophers have, it seems to me, scarcely touched this thing. (*c*) No more than another, of equal importance. They have always this argument on the tongue, to console our mortal condition: the soul is either mortal or immortal; if mortal, she will be without pain; if immortal, she will be continually better off. They never touch the other branch — what if she is continually worse off? and leave to the poets the threats of future punishments. But thereby they give themselves an advantage.[4] There are two omissions in their reasoning which often present themselves to me.[5] I return to the first.

[1] The violence of the disease, diffused throughout the frame, agitates the soul, as the foaming waves of the salt sea boil with the mastering might of the winds. — Lucretius, III, 492.

[2] In 1580 to 1588: *de la vie*.

[3] Often in diseases of the brain the mind wanders and goes astray; for it loses its reason and talks deliriously; and sometimes, in a profound lethargy, it is carried into deep and eternal sleep, and the eyes and the head droop. — Lucretius, III, 463.

[4] *Ils se donnent un beau jeu*.

[5] For example, in Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, I, 11.

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(*a*) This soul loses the experience [1] of the supreme Stoic good, so constant and so stable. Our fine wisdom must needs here surrender and lay down its arms. For the rest, they also judged, from the weakness of human reason, that the commingling and association of two things so diverse as are the mortal and the immortal is inconceivable.

> Quippe etenim mortale æterno jungere, et una
> Consentire putare, et fungi mutua posse,
> Desipere est. Quid enim diversius esse putandum est,
> Aut magis inter se disjunctum discrepitansque,
> Quam mortale quod est, immortali atque perenni
> Junctum, in concilio sævas tolerare procellas? [2]

Moreover, they felt the soul to be bound to death, like the body, —

> (*b*) simul ævo fessa fatiscit, [3] —

(*c*) and this, according to Zeno, the image of sleep shows us clearly; for he thinks that it is a feebleness and succumbing of the soul as well as of the body: *contrahi animum et quasi labi putat atque concidere.* [4] (*a*) And what is perceived in some persons, that her force and her vigour remain to the end of life, they referred to the differences in diseases; as we see men, at that extremity, retain, this man one sense, that man another; this one the sense of hearing, that one of smell, without impairment; and there is no enfeeblement so universal that some organs do not remain sound and vigorous,

> (*b*) Non alio pacto quam si, pes cum dolet ægri,
> In nullo caput interea sit forte dolore. [5]

[1] *Le goust.*

[2] For to link what is mortal with what is eternal, and to suppose that they can harmonise and can be reciprocally acted upon, is sheer folly. For what can be conceived more incongruous, or more diversified and discordant, than what is mortal eternally linked with what is immortal and everlasting, to endure, united, fierce storms? — Lucretius, III, 800.

[3] It breaks down at the same time, worn out with age. — *Ibid.*, 458.

[4] He thinks that the mind contracts, and, as it were, slips and falls. — Cicero, *De Div.*, II, 58.

[5] Just as the foot of a sick man may ache, his head, meanwhile, feeling no pain. — Lucretius, III, 110.

The vision of our judgement has the same relation to the truth that the eye of the owl has to the splendour of the sun, as Aristotle says.[1] How could we better be convinced of this than by such gross blindness in such manifest light? (*a*) For the contrary opinion of the immortality of the soul, (*c*) which Cicero says was first introduced, at all events as testified to in books, by Pherecides Syrus, in the time of King Tullus[2] (others attribute the conception to Thales, and others to other sages), (*a*) is the part of human learning treated of with the least openness and most uncertainty. The most positive dogmatists are, at this point most especially, forced to seek the shelter of the shades of the Academy. No one knows what Aristotle has ordained on this subject;[3] (*c*) nor all the ancients in general, who handle it with a wavering belief; *rem gratissimam promittentium magis quam probantium*.[4] (*a*) He hid himself in clouds of words and difficult and unintelligible meanings, and left it for his followers to debate as much about his judgement, as about the matter of it. Two things made that belief[5] plausible to them: one, that unless the soul is immortal, there would no longer be aught on which to base the vain hopes of glory, which is a consideration of marvellous influence in the world; the other, that it is a very useful impression, (*c*) as Plato says, (*a*) that the vices, when they escape from the dim and uncertain eyes of human justice, remain always as a butt for divine justice, which will pursue them, yea, after the death of the guilty.[6]

(*c*) An extreme desire possesses man to prolong his existence; he has provided therefor by every means. For the preservation of the body there are tombs; for the preservation of the name, glory.[7] He has employed all his wit in rebuilding himself, impatient of his fortune and propping

[1] See the *Metaphysics*, II, 1.

[2] See Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, I, 16.

[3] See C. Agrippa, *Of the uncertainty and vanity of learning*.

[4] A most acceptable thing, rather promised than proved. — Seneca, *Epistle* 102.

[5] Of the immortality of the soul.

[6] See Plato, *Laws*, book X. "But it was not the text of Plato that suggested these words to Montaigne." — M. Villey.

[7] Cf. Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, I, 14, 15.

himself up by his conceptions. The soul, by reason of her disquiet and her weakness, having no secure footing, goes seeking on all sides consolations, hopes, and supports, in external circumstances, where she may cling and fix herself; and, slight and fantastic as her imagination fashions them, she rests on them more confidently than on herself, and more willingly.

(*a*) But those who are most obstinate in this so just and manifest conviction of the immortality of our spirits — it is a wonderful thing how incompetent [1] and powerless they have found themselves to assure it by their human powers. (*c*) *Somnia sunt non docentis, sed optantis*,[2] said an ancient writer. (*a*) Man can recognise by this evidence that he owes to fortune and to chance the truth which he discovers unaided, since, even when it has fallen into his hands, he has not the wherewithal to grasp it and maintain it, and his reason has not the power to make use of it. All things arrived at by our own reasoning and ability, true as well as false, are subject to uncertainty and discussion. It was for the chastisement of our pride, and the instruction of our wretchedness and incapacity, that God brought about the perplexity and confusion of the ancient Tower of Babel. Whatever we undertake without his assistance, whatever we behold save by the lamp of his grace, is but vanity and folly; the very essence of truth, which is unchanging and constant when fortune gives us possession of it, we corrupt and adulterate by our weakness. Whatever course man takes from his own impulse, God directs it to arrive always at this same disorder, the image of which he presents to us so vividly by the just chastisement with which he smote the presumption of Nimrod,[3] and brought to naught the vain attempts at the construction of his Pyramid. (*c*) *Perdam sapientiam sapientium, et prudentiam prudentium reprobabo*.[4] (*a*) The diversity of dialects [5] and of tongues with which he threw

[1] *Courts*.

[2] These are dreams, not of one who teaches, but of one who wishes. — Cicero, *Academica*, II, 38.

[3] *Nembrot*.

[4] I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. — *I Corinthians*, I, 19.

[5] *Idiomes*.

that work into confusion — how does it differ from this infinite and perpetual altercation and discordance of opinions and of arguments which accompanies and confounds the vain construction of human knowledge? (*c*) And confounds it profitably. Who could restrain us if we had one grain of knowledge? This saint[1] has given me great pleasure: *Ipsa utilitatis occultatio aut humilitatis exercitatio est, aut elationis attritio.*[2] To what degree of presumption and insolence do we not carry our blindness and our stupidity!

(*a*) But, to resume my subject,[3] it was truly most reasonable that we should be indebted to God alone, and to the benefit of his grace, for the truth of so noble a belief, since from his liberality alone we receive the fruit of immortality, which consists in the enjoyment of everlasting beatitude. (*c*) Let us frankly confess that God alone has told us of it, and faith; for it is no lesson of nature and of our reason. And he who shall repeatedly examine what his existence and his powers, both inward and outward, would be, without this divine grace;[4] he who shall look upon man without flattering him, will see in him neither ability nor faculty that has any touch of aught but death and the earth. The more we give and owe and render to God, the more truly are we Christians. That which this Stoic philosopher says that he accepts because of casual assent of the popular voice, would it not be better that he should accept it from God? *Cum de animorum æternitate disserimus, non leve momentum apud nos habet consensus hominum aut timentium inferos, aut colentium. Utor hac publica persuasione.*[5]

(*a*) Now the weakness of human conjectures on this subject is singularly manifest by the fabulous circumstances which they have added in the train of this opinion, to find out of what nature is this our immortality. (*c*) Let us put

[1] Augustine; the passage quoted is in the *De Civ. Dei*, XI, 22.

[2] The obscurity in which is hidden the knowledge of things of interest to us is an exercise of humility and a curb to our pride.

[3] That is, "All things arrived at by our own reasoning," etc. (p. 336).

[4] *Et qui retentera son estre et ses forces . . . sans ce privilege divin* [of immortality].

[5] When we discuss the immortality of the soul, of no light moment to us is the conformity of men who either fear or adore the infernal powers. I rest on this general conviction. — Seneca, *Epistle* 117.6.

aside the Stoics, — *usuram nobis largiuntur tanquam cornicibus; diu mansuros aiunt animos; semper, negant*,[1] — who give to souls a life beyond this one, but finite. (*a*) The most universal and generally received opinion, and which endures in divers places to our day, is that of which Pythagoras is said to be the author — not that he was the first to conceive it, but because it derived much weight and credit from the authority of his approval: it is that souls, on their departure from us, did but pass from one body to another, from a lion to a horse, from a horse to a king, proceeding thus incessantly from habitation to habitation.[2] (*c*) And he said that he remembered having been Æthalides, then Euphorbus, still later Hermotimus, and finally from Pyrrhus to have passed into Pythagoras, having memory of himself for two hundred and six years.[3] Some added that these same souls remount sometimes to heaven, and come down again.[4]

O pater, anne aliquas ad cœlum hinc ire putandum est
Sublimes animas iterumque ad tarda reverti
Corpora? Quæ lucis miseris tam dira cupido? [5]

Origen makes them go and come forever between the good and the evil state.[6] Varro sets forth the belief that when four hundred and forty years have revolved, they rejoin their first bodies;[7] Chrysippus, that this must happen after an unknown and not defined period.[8] Plato, who says he derives

[1] They grant our bodies a length of life like that of crows; they say that our souls will live for a long time, but not forever. — Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, I, 31.

[2] In 1580 to 1588: *Socrates, Platon, et quasi tous ceux qui ont voulu croire l'immortalité des ames, se sont laissez emporter à cette invention, et plusieurs nations, comme entre autres la nostre* [*et nos Druides*]. The last three words were dropped in 1588.

[3] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Pythagoras;* Seneca, *Epistle* 108.19. And cf. Book II, chap. 11, *supra*, p. 167.

[4] See Plutarch, *On the face in the moon.*

[5] O my father [Æneas is addressing Anchises], must we think that some souls rise hence to heaven, and return again to their sluggish bodies? What hapless yearning for the light have these poor wretches? — Virgil, *Æneid*, VI, 719.

[6] See St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, XXI, 16.

[7] See *Ibid.*, XXII, 28.

[8] See *Ibid.*

from Pindar and from ancient poetry this belief in the infinite vicissitudes of mutation for which the soul is made ready, having none but temporal pains or rewards in the other world, even as her life in this world is but temporal, infers in her a singular knowledge of the concerns of heaven, of hell, and of this world, which she has visited and revisited and abided in throughout many peregrinations:[1] matter for reminiscence on her part. He thus continues elsewhere: "He who has lived virtuously rejoins the star to which he is assigned; he who has lived ill becomes a woman, and if even then he does not mend his ways, he is again changed into a beast of a nature suited to his vicious conditions; and he will not see the end of his punishments until he shall have reverted to his true conditions, having by the force of reason got rid of the coarse and stupid and elemental[2] qualities that were in him.[3]

(*a*) But I desire not to forget the objection that the Epicureans make to this transmigration from body to body. It is amusing. They ask what order would be observed if the crowd of the dying should outnumber that of the newly born; for the souls dislodged from their abodes would press upon one another to attain a place first in this new envelope. And they ask also how they would pass their time while they were waiting for a lodging to be made ready for them. Or, on the other hand, if more animals were born than died, they say that the bodies would be in ill case, awaiting the infusion of their souls, and it might consequently happen that some of them would die before they had been alive.

> Denique connubia ad Veneris partusque ferarum
> Esse animas præsto deridiculum esse videtur,
> Et spectare immortales mortalia membra
> Innumero numero, certareque præproperanter
> Inter se, quæ prima potissimaque insinuetur.[4]

[1] See Plato, *Meno*.

[2] *Elementaire;* that is, belonging to earth, air, fire, and water.

[3] See Plato, *Timæus*.

[4] To suppose that souls are at hand during the unions of Venus and the births of animals is absurd, and that immortal spirits in number numberless wait for mortal limbs, and contend in rivalry which shall first and by preference have entrance. — Lucretius, III, 776.

Others have made the soul abide in the body of the dead, to give life to the snakes, the worms, and other creatures, which are said to be born of the corruption of our limbs, and even of our ashes.[1] Others divide her into a mortal part and another immortal. Others say that she is corporeal and, notwithstanding this, immortal. Some make her immortal, without learning and without knowledge.[2] There are those also who have believed that, from the souls of the damned, devils are made (*c*) (and some among ourselves have so considered[3]); (*a*) as Plutarch thinks that gods are made of those who are saved; for there are few things which that author asserts in so assured a manner as he does this, maintaining everywhere else a hesitating and ambiguous style. "It is to be thought," he says, "and firmly believed, that the souls of men virtuous according to nature and according to divine law, from men become saints; and from saints, demigods; and from demigods, after they are thoroughly cleansed and purified as by the sacrifices of purgation, being delivered from all passibility and all mortality, they become, not by virtue of any special decree,[4] but in truth, and in accordance with manifest reason, complete and perfect gods, receiving thereby a most fortunate and most glorious end." [5] But he who would see him, who is among the most restrained and moderate of the band, bestir himself more boldly, and tell us miraculous tales on this matter, him I refer to his treatise of the moon and his *Dæmon of Socrates*, where, more clearly than anywhere else, it can be verified that the mysteries of philosophy have many strange matters in common with those of poetry; the human intelligence spending itself idly in desiring to search and inspect all things even to the bottom; in the same way that, wearied and worn by the long course of life, we fall back into a childish condition.

We have now seen the excellent and certain teachings that we derive from human learning on the subject of our

[1] An allusion to Lucretius, III, 718 ff.

[2] *Cognoissance.*

[3] See Vivès's *Commentary* on St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, IX, 11.

[4] *Non par aucune ordonnance civile.*

[5] See Plutarch, *Life of Romulus*. This quotation is copied textually by Montaigne from Amyot's translation.

souls. There is no less temerity in what it teaches us of the corporeal organs. Let us select one or two examples of this; for otherwise we should be lost in this foggy and vast sea of medicinal errors. Let us ascertain if there is agreement, in this point at least, about the matter whereof men are produced, one from another. (*c*) For, as to their first production, it is no wonder if, about a thing so secret [1] and so ancient, the human understanding is confused and brought to naught. Archelaus, the natural philosopher, of whom, according to Aristoxenus, Socrates was a disciple and favourite, said that both men and beasts are made from a milky slime, expressed by the heat of the earth.[2] (*a*) Pithagoras dict nostre semence estre l'escume de nostre meilleur sang;[3] Platon, de l'escoulement de la moelle de l'espine du dos, ce qu'il argumente de ce que cet endroit se sent le premier de la lasseté de la besongne; Alcmeon, partie de la substance du cerveau; et qu'il soit ainsi, dit-il, les yeux troublent à ceux qui se travaillent outre mesure à cet exercice; Democritus, une substance extraite de toute la masse corporelle; Epicurus, extraicte de l'ame et du corps; Aristote, un excrement tiré de l'aliment du sang, le dernier qui s'espand en nos membres; autres, du sang cuit et digeré par la chaleur des genitoires, ce qu'ils jugent de ce qu'aus extremes efforts on rend des gouttes de pur sang; enquoy il semble qu'il y ayt plus d'apparence, si on peut tirer quelque apparence d'une confusion si infinie. Or, pour mener à effect cette semence, combien en font-ils d'opinions contraires? Aristote et Democritus tiennent que les femmes n'ont point de sperme, et que ce n'est qu'une sueur qu'elles eslancent par la chaleur du plaisir et du mouvement, qui ne sert de rien à la generation; Galen, au contraire, et ses suyvans, que, sans la rencontre des semences, la generation ne se peut faire. Here are the physicians, the philosophers, the lawyers, and the theologians, wrestling pell-mell with our wives about the question as to the length of time which women carry their offspring. I myself, by my own example, support those

[1] *Si haute.*

[2] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Archelaus.*

[3] This and the following opinions are from Plutarch, *Opinions of the Philosophers.*

who maintain pregnancy to be of eleven months. The world is based on this experience; there is no simple little woman who can not give her opinion on all these disputes, and yet we should never be in agreement about it.

This is enough to prove that man is no better instructed in the knowledge of himself as to the corporeal than as to the spiritual part. We have put him before himself to be examined by himself,[1] his reason by his reason, to see what she would tell us about it. It seems to me that I have clearly shown how little she herself understands herself. (*c*) And he who does not himself understand himself — what can he understand? *Quasi vero mensuram ullius rei possit agere qui sui nesciat.*[2] Truly Protagoras was talking in the air[3] in making man the measure of all things, who never knows even his own measure.[4] If it be not he, his dignity will not permit that any other creature should have this advantage. Now, he being so in opposition to himself, and one opinion constantly subverting another, this flattering proposition was simply a mockery, which led us necessarily to infer the nullity of the measure and the measurer.[5] When Thales judges the knowledge of man to be very difficult for man, knowledge of all things else is seen to be impossible for him.[6]

(*a*) You, for whom I have taken the pains to write so at length,[7] contrary to my custom, will not eschew upholding your Sebond by the ordinary manner of reasoning in which you are constantly trained, and will employ in this your intelligence and your meditation; for the last trick of fence used here must be resorted to only as an extreme resource. It is a desperate thrust, in which you must abandon your weapons to make your opponent lose his; and a secret shift, which must be used rarely and cautiously. It is great rashness to be ready to kill yourself in order to kill another.

[1] *Nous l'avons proposé luy mesmes à soy.*

[2] As if he who knows not his own measure could measure any thing. — Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, II, 1.

[3] *Nous en contoit des belles.*

[4] See Cicero, *Academica*, II, 46; Plato, *Cratylus.*

[5] *La neantise du compas et du compassur.*

[6] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Thales.*

[7] *D'estendre un si long corps.*

(*b*) One need not be ready to die, in order to revenge oneself, as Gobrias was; for, being closely engaged with a Persian lord, Darius coming up, sword in hand, but hesitating to attack for fear of hitting Gobrias, he [1] called out to him to strike boldly even though he should pierce through them both.[2] (*c*) Arms and conditions of combat so desperate as to make it incredible that either adversary could escape, I have known to be disallowed, when proposed. The Portuguese made prisoners in the Indian sea of fourteen Turks, who, impatient of their captivity, resolved upon setting on fire and reduce to ashes themselves and their master and the vessels, by rubbing some ship's nails against each other until a spark fell upon the barrels of gunpowder that were on board; and they succeeded.[3]

(*a*) We touch here the limits and final boundaries of all learning, of which what is beyond is erroneous, as with virtue.[4] Keep to the travelled road. It is not in the least worth while to be so cunning and so shrewd. Remember what the Tuscan proverb says: *Chi troppo s'assottiglia si scavezza.*[5] I counsel you, in your thought and in your conversation, as well as in your behaviour and in every other thing, moderation and temperance, and the avoidance of what is new and what is unusual. All wandering ways are to me displeasing. You who, by the authority which your high rank confers upon you, and even more by the advantages given you by qualities more your own, can with a glance command whom you please — you should have given this office to some one who made profession of letters, who would much more effectively have sustained you and made more valuable these conceptions.[6] However, here is enough for what you have need of.

[1] Gobrias.

[2] See Plutarch, *How to know a flatterer from a friend;* Herodotus, III, 78.

[3] See Goulard, *History of Portugal*, XII, 23.

[4] Cf. Book I, chap. 15 Vol. I, p. 89: *La vaillance a ses limites comme les autres vertus, lesquels franchis et outrepassez, on se trouve dans le train du vice.*

[5] He who seeks his way too carefully loses it. — Petrarch, *Canzone* XXII, 48.

[6] In 1580 to 1588: *et qui se fut servy, à faire son amas, d'autres que de nostre Plutarque.*

Epicurus said of the laws that the worst were so necessary to us that, without them, men would eat one another up.[1] (*c*) And Plato, in like tone,[2] that without laws we should live like brute beasts; and tried to prove it. (*a*) Our mind is a vagrant instrument, dangerous and rash; it is difficult to bring order and moderation into it; and in these days we see that those minds that have some rare superiority to others, and some unusual activity, are, almost without exception, of a disorderly license in opinions and morals. It is a miracle if one is to be found which is sober and companionable. It is wise to keep the human mind within as narrow limits as possible. In study, as in other things, it is needful to count and regulate its steps; the limits of its hunting grounds must be carefully marked.[3] We bridle and bind it with religions, with laws, with customs, with learning, with precepts, with mortal and immortal punishments and rewards; still it is seen, by means of its swift motion and its laxity, to escape from all these bonds. It is an unreal body, which has nothing by which it can be seized and held; an irregular and misshapen body which can neither be tied nor grasped. (*b*) Certainly there are few souls so disciplined, so strong and well endowed, that they can be trusted with their own guidance, and can, with moderation and without rashness, sail in freedom of judgement beyond commonly received ideas. It is more expedient that they should be under guardianship. The mind is a dangerous weapon, (*c*) even to its owner, (*b*) for him who knows not how to use it as it should be used, and with discretion. (*c*) And there is no beast upon which it is more truly necessary to put a board before its eyes, to keep its sight under control and narrowed to what is before its feet, and to prevent it from straying hither and yon, outside the tracks which custom and the laws mark out for it. (*a*) Wherefore it will befit you better to confine yourself to the customary path, whatever it be, than to wing your flight toward this ungoverned liberty. But if any one of these new doctors undertakes to show the sharpness of his

[1] See Plutarch, *Against Colotes*. It is Colotes to whom the remark is attributed.

[2] *A deux doigts près*. See Plato, *Laws*, book IX.

[3] *Il luy faut tailler par art*.

wit in your presence, at the expense of his salvation and of yours, this preservative will rid you, in extreme need, of this dangerous infliction which spreads daily in your courts, and prevent the contagion of this poison from injuring either you or those about you.

The liberty, then, and rashness of those ancient minds gave rise — in philosophy and human learning — to many schools of varying opinions, each undertaking to judge and choose, in order to belong to a party. But, now (*c*) that all men go in one direction,— *qui certis quibusdam destinatisque sententiis addicti et consecrati sunt, ut etiam quæ non probant, cogantur defendere*,[1] — and (*a*) that we accept the arts [2] by civil authority and decree, (*c*) so that the schools have but one model and similar circumscribed instruction and discipline, (*a*) we no longer regard what the coins weigh and are worth, but each man in his turn receives them at the value which common consent and credit [3] gives them. We do not argue about the debasement, but for how much they are current; [4] thus every thing is put on a level. Medicine is ranked with geometry; and jugglings, enchantments, liaisons,[5] intercourse with spirits of the departed, prognostications, domifications,[6] and even that absurd search for the philosopher's stone — every thing takes its place without gainsaying. We need but know that the seat of Mars is in the middle of the triangle of the palm, that of Venus in the thumb, and that of Mercury in the little finger; and that when the table-line cuts the base of the forefinger,[7] it is a sign of cruelty; when it stops under the middle finger and the natural median line makes an angle with the line of life

[1] Who are so addicted and pledged to certain beliefs, that even they are compelled to defend what they do not believe. — Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, II, 2.

[2] That is, the *trivium* and *quadrivium*, or course of seven sciences. Hence the "faculty of arts," and the degrees of Bachelor and Master of Arts.

[3] *L'approbation et le cours.*

[4] *On ne plaide pas de l'alloy, mais de l'usage.*

[5] That is, *liaisons de mariages = nouements d'aiguillette.*

[6] An astrological term, signifying the division of the sky into twelve parts, called "houses," corresponding to the signs of the Zodiac, to each of which a special influence is ascribed.

[7] *Quand la mensale coupe le tubercle de l'enseigneur.*

at the same place, it is a sign of a miserable death. That, in a woman, if the natural median line is open, and does not close the angle with the line of life, it indicates that she will be unchaste. I call you yourself as a witness whether with this much learning a man may not pass with reputation and favour in all companies.

Theophrastus said that human knowledge, being shewn its way by the senses, could judge of the causes of things to a certain extent; but that, having arrived at the final and primal causes, it must needs halt and draw back, either because of its weakness or because of the difficulty of things.[1] It is a reasonable and agreeable idea that our ability can carry us to the knowledge of some things, and that it has a certain amount of power, beyond which it is rash to employ it. This idea is plausible and put forward by persons ready to make concessions; [2] but it is difficult to set limits to our mind; it is inquisitive and eager, and has no more occasion to stay itself at a thousand paces than at fifty. Having found by experience that where one man has failed to attain, another has arrived; and that what was unknown to one age, the following age has made clear; and that the sciences and arts are not cast in moulds, but rather are gradually formed and shaped by being many times handled and polished, as bears slowly fashion their cubs by licking them;[3] what my strength can not discover, I do not cease sounding and testing, and by dint of repeatedly groping for this new matter and turning it over and over, stirring it and warming it, I open to him who comes after me some facility for profiting by it more at his ease; and I deliver it to him more pliable and manageable, —

> ut hymettia sole
> Cera remollescit, tractataque pollice, multas
> Vertitur in facies, ipsoque fit utilis usu.[4]

[1] See C. Agrippa, *Of the uncertainty and vanity of learning.*

[2] *Par gens de composition.*

[3] This image is found in Aulus Gellius, and is frequent in sixteenth-century writers, *e. g.*, Rabelais, Du Bellay, Estienne Pasquier, who apply it to the most diverse subjects.

[4] As the wax of Hymettus is softened by the sun, and when worked by the hand, takes on many forms, and is made useful by being used. — Ovid, *Metam.*, X, 284.

As much will the next man do with it for the third; which is the reason why difficulty should not make me lose hope, nor my powerlessness as little; for it is only my own. Man is as able to apprehend all things as some; [1] and if he acknowledges, as Theophrastus says, his ignorance of first causes and of origins,[2] then let him honestly renounce all the rest of his learning; if the foundation is lacking, his reason is overthrown. Disputation and inquiry have no other aim and goal than fundamental causes; [3] if his career be not to this end, he is thrown into infinite uncertainty. (*c*) *Non potest aliud alio magis minusve comprehendi quoniam omnium rerum una est definitio comprehendendi.*[4]

(*a*) Now it is probable that, if the soul knew any thing, she would know herself first of all; and if she knew any thing outside of herself, it would be her body and her envelope better than every thing else. If we see, even to this day, the gods of medicine disputing about our anatomy, —

Mulciber in Troiam, pro Troia stabat Apollo,[5] —

when can we expect them to be in accord about it? We are more akin to ourselves [6] than the whiteness of snow or the weight of stone is to us. If man knows not himself, how can he know his functions and his powers? It is not, peradventure, that some true knowledge has not its abode in us, but it comes by chance. And inasmuch as by the same road, the same manner and guidance, errors are received into our soul, she has not the wherewithal to discern them or to distinguish truth from falsehood.

The Academicians admitted some leaning in judgement, and deemed it incompletely thought out [7] to say that it was no more probable that snow was white than black, and that

[1] That is, some things are impossible for man to know.

[2] *Des principes.*

[3] *Les principes.*

[4] One thing can be comprehended neither more nor less than another, since one definition of comprehending includes all things. — Cicero, *Academica*, II, 41.

[5] Mulciber [Vulcan] fought against Troy, Apollo for Troy. — Ovid, *Tristia*, I, 2.5.

[6] *Nous nous sommes plus voisins.*

[7] *Trop crud.*

we were no more certain of the motion of a stone cast from our own hand than of that of the eighth sphere. And to avoid this difficulty and unfamiliar conception, which truly can not easily find a place in our thought, although they asserted that we were in no wise capable of learning, and that the truth is engulfed in deep abysses, where human sight can not penetrate,[1] yet they acknowledged that some things were more probable than others, and admitted this faculty of their judgement, that it could lean rather to one likelihood than to another; they allowed it this tendency, forbidding all decision.

The opinion of the Pyrrhonians is bolder and, at the same time, seemingly more true.[2] For this leaning of the Academicians, and this propension to one proposition rather than to another — is it any thing other than the recognition of some more apparent truth in this than in that? If our understanding can contain within it the forms, the features, the bearing, and the aspect of the truth, it would see her completely not less well than partially, in her beginning, and imperfect.[3] This appearance of verisimilitude which causes them to incline rather to the left than to the right — increase it; multiply that ounce of verisimilitude, which turns the balance, to a hundred or a thousand ounces; it will, consequently, finally come to pass that the balance will entirely decide the matter, and will settle upon a choice and a perfect truth. But how do they allow themselves to yield to the semblance of truth, if they know not the truth? How do they know the semblance of that of which they know not the nature? Either we are able to judge absolutely, or we are absolutely unable to judge. If our intellectual and perceptive faculties are without foundation and footing, if they are but driven by the waves and the wind,[4] to no purpose do we allow our judgement to be affected by any part of their operation, whatever likelihood it seems to offer us; and the safest position for our understanding, and the most fortu-

[1] This figure was used by Democritus, and Cicero employs it twice (*Academica*, I, 12, and II, 10). Montaigne has it again in Book III, chap. 8.

[2] In 1580 to 1588: *beaucoup plus veritable et plus ferme.*

[3] *Il la verroit entiere aussi bien que demie, naissante et imperfecte.*

[4] *Si elles ne font que floter et vanter* [*venter?*].

nate, would be that in which it should maintain itself steady, upright, inflexible, without tottering, and without excitement. (*c*) *Inter visa vera aut falsa ad animi assensum nihil interest.*[1]

(*a*) We see clearly enough that things do not find place in us in their real form and in their real nature, and do not enter into us of their own force and authority; because, if it were so, all men would receive them alike: wine would be the same in the mouth of the sick man and in the mouth of the healthy man; he whose fingers are chapped or benumbed would find the same roughness in the wood or iron he handles that another finds. Outside objects, then, submit to us at our discretion; they find such place in us as we please. And if on our part we received any thing unchanged; if the human grasp were sufficiently powerful and firm to seize truth by our own means, these means being common to all men, truth would be passed from hand to hand, from one to another. And at least there would be found one thing in the world, of so many that are there, which would be believed by men with universal consent. But the fact that there is no proposition which is not discussed and controverted among us, or which may not be, shows plainly that our innate judgement does not grasp very clearly what it does grasp; for my judgement can not make itself accepted by the judgement of my companion; which is a sign that I have grasped it by some other means than by an innate power which is in me and in all men.

Let us set aside this infinite confusion of opinions that we find even among philosophers, and this perpetual and universal discussion as to the knowledge of things. For this is very certainly presupposed, that about no one thing are men — I mean the best-endowed, the most able men — in agreement: not that the sky is over our heads, for they who doubt every thing, also doubt that; and they who deny that we can comprehend any thing say that we have not comprehended that the sky is over our heads; and these two opinions are beyond comparison the most numerous. Besides this infinite variety and division, it is easy to see, from the

[1] Between true and false appearances, nothing influences the assent of our minds. — Cicero, *Academica*, II, 28.

confusion which our judgement causes ourselves, and from the uncertainty that every one feels within himself, that its position is very insecure. How variously do we judge of things! How often do our inclinations change! What I maintain to-day and what I believe, I maintain and believe with all my power of belief. All my tools and all that I have recourse to, lay hold of this opinion and answer to me for it as far as they can. I could not embrace any truth or maintain it more strongly than I do this. I am entirely possessed by it; I am verily set fast therein; [1] but has it not happened to me, not once, but a hundred, but a thousand times, and every day, to have embraced some other thing with these same tools, in this same manner which I have since judged to be false? A man should at least become discreet at his own expense. If I have often found myself deceived by a similar aspect, if my touchstone is usually found to be false and my scales uneven and inaccurate, what assurance can I feel at this time more than at others? Is it not folly to allow myself to be misled so many times by one guide? None the less, let fortune change our position five hundred times, let her incessantly empty and fill our belief, like a vessel, with other and other opinions, the one in our eyes, the last one, is the one certain and infallible. For this we must abandon riches, honour, life, and salvation, and every thing;

> Posterior . . . res illa reperta,
> Perdit, et immutat sensus ad pristina quæque.[2]

(*b*) Whatever is preached to us, whatever we learn, we should always remember that it is man who gives and man who receives; it is a mortal hand that offers it to us, it is a mortal hand that accepts it. The things that come to us from heaven have alone the right and authority to persuade; alone, the stamp of truth; also we do not see this truth with our eyes, nor do we receive it by our endeavours: [3] this great and sacred image could not enter into so mean a habitation, if God did not prepare it for such occupancy, if God did not

[1] *J'y suis tout entier, j'y suis voyrement.*

[2] The latter changes and destroys our feelings toward the former things. — Lucretius, V, 1414.

[3] *Nos moyens.*

reshape and strengthen it by his special and supernatural grace and favour.

(*a*) At least, our faulty condition should make us bear ourselves with more moderation and restraint in our changes. We should remember, whatever we receive into the understanding, that we often receive false things, and that we receive them by these same tools, which often contradict and deceive themselves. Now, it is no wonder if they contradict themselves, being so easily bent and whirled about by very slight occurrences. It is certain that our apprehension, our judgement, and the faculties of the soul in general are affected by the motions and changes of the body, which changes are continual. Is not our mind more alert, our memory more prompt, our conversation more lively, in health than in sickness? Do not joy and gaiety make us receive the subjects that present themselves to our soul in a quite other light than disquiet and melancholy? Do you think that the verses of Catullus or of Sappho delight a miserly and sullen old man as they do a lusty and ardent youth? (*b*) Cleomenes, son of Anaxandridas, being ill, his friends reproached him for having new and unwonted humours and fancies. "I agree," he said, "for I am not the same man that I was when well; being a different man, my opinions and fancies are different also." [1] (*a*) In the chicanery of our law courts there is often used this phrase, which is said about criminals who find the judges in a gentle and kindly mood: *Gaudeat de bona fortuna* (let him rejoice in good fortune); for it is certain that judges [2] are found to be sometimes more inclined to condemnation, rougher and harsher, and sometimes more gracious, indulgent, and inclined to excuse the offence. He who brings with him from his house the pain of the gout, of jealousy, or of the thievery of his servant, having his soul all tinged and steeped with anger — it is not to be doubted that his judgement about the case in hand may be affected. (*b*) That venerable senate of the Areopagus heard causes at night, lest the sight of the suitors should corrupt its justice. (*a*) The very atmosphere and the serenity of the sky cause some mutation in us, as is said in these Greek verses in Cicero:

[1] See Plutarch, *Apothegms of the Lacedæmonians*. [2] *Les jugemens*.

Tales sunt hominum mentes, quali pater ipse
Juppiter auctifera lustravit lampade terras.[1]

It is not only the fevers, potions, and great events that upset our judgement: the slightest things in the world twist it about. And it is not to be doubted, although we are not conscious of it, that, if continuous fever can overwhelm our souls, the tertian, in its measure and proportion, brings some change to us. If apoplexy dulls and extinguishes altogether the power of sight of our understanding, it is not to be doubted that a cold beclouds it; and, consequently, there is scarcely a single hour in our life when our judgement may be found in its proper disposition, our body being subject to so many continual mutations and filled with so many kinds of springs [2] (I believe the physicians about this), that it is almost impossible that there shall not always be some one of them that goes wrong. Moreover, this infirmity does not clearly show itself if it be not quite extreme and irremediable, inasmuch as the reason still works, distorted and limping and disjointed, and works with falsehood as with truth. Consequently, it is not easy to perceive its mistakenness and irregularity. I always mean by "reason" that form of reflection [3] which every one fashions in himself: this reason, of whose nature there may be a hundred different kinds employed about one and the same subject, is an instrument of lead and wax, stretchable, pliable, and adaptable to all curves [4] and all measures; there is needed only the ability to know how to turn it. Whatever good purpose a judge may have, if he does not give careful attention to himself, which few people think of, the leaning due to friendship, to kinship, to beauty, and to revenge, and not only such weighty matters, but that fortuitous instinct which makes us favour one thing more than another, and which,

[1] Men's moods accord with the varying light that Father Jupiter spreads over the earth. — These lines are a translation by Cicero (among his *Fragmenta*) of the *Odyssey*, XVIII, 135. They are cited by St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, V, 28. Montaigne has already cited them in Book II, chap. 1, near the beginning.

[2] *Ressorts;* that is, impelling forces.

[3] *Cette apparence de discours.*

[4] *A tous biais.*

without the permission of reason, gives us a choice between two similar subjects, or some shadow of equality without solidity, may imperceptibly insinuate into his judgement the recommendation or disfavour of a cause, and turn the scale.

I, who watch myself more closely, who have my eyes incessantly fixed upon myself, as one who has not much to do elsewhere, —

quis sub Arcto
Rex gelidæ metuatur oræ,
Quid Tyridatem terreat, unice
Securus,[1] —

I should hardly dare to say what emptiness and weakness I find in myself. My footing is so unstable and so ill assured, I find it so naturally and so often quaking and tottering under me,[2] and my sight is so disordered that, fasting, I feel myself to be another man than after eating; if my health and the brightness of a fine day smile upon me, you will find me all I should be; [3] if a corn hurts my toe, you will find me frowning, rude, and inaccessible. (*b*) The same pace of a horse seems to me at one time hard, at one time easy, and the same road now shorter, again longer, and one and the same fashion [4] sometimes more, sometimes less pleasing. (*a*) One hour I am for doing any thing, another for doing nothing; that which is a pleasure to me at this moment will later be a trouble. There are a thousand ill-advised and casual agitations within me. It may be either a melancholy mood that possesses me, or a choleric one; and at one moment vexation predominates in me by its private authority, at another moment, gladness. When I occupy myself with books, I may perceive in a certain passage excellent graces which touch my soul; let me return to it another day — to no purpose do I turn it this way and that, to no purpose do I twist and manipulate it — it is an obscure and shapeless lump to me.

[1] Supremely careless as to what king is feared in the cold regions under the Bear, or what causes fear to Tiridates. — Horace, *Odes*, I, 26.3.

[2] *Si aysé à croler et si prest au branle.*

[3] *Me voila honneste homme.*

[4] *Une mesme forme.*

(*b*) In my own writings, even, I do not always regain the thought of my first conception: I know not what I meant to say, and often fret myself in correction and giving a new meaning, from having lost the first, which was worth more. I do nothing but go and come; my judgement does not always move forward: it floats, it flits about,

velut minuta magno
Deprensa navis in mari vesaniente vento.[1]

Many a time, having undertaken, as I am apt to do for practice and for pastime, to uphold an opinion contrary to my own, my mind, applying itself and turning that way, so fixes me there that I no longer find the reason of my first belief, and I abandon it. I lead myself, as it were, in the direction toward which I lean, whatever that may be, and am borne on by my weight. Almost every one would say as much of himself, if he considered himself as I do. Preachers know that the emotion that comes to them when speaking gives life to their belief, and that in anger we devote ourselves more to the defence of our proposition, impress it upon ourselves, and embrace it with more vehemence and approbation, than we do when we are cool and in our sober senses. You tell your case simply to the advocate; he answers you about it hesitatingly and doubtfully; you feel that it is indifferent to him whether he undertakes to defend one side or the other. Have you paid him well to set his teeth in it and to take up your quarrel? does he begin to be interested about it? has he warmed up his will? his reasoning power and his learning become warm at the same time; behold a manifest and indubitable truth which presents itself to his understanding; he discovers therein a wholly new light, and honestly believes it, and so persuades himself Truly, I know not whether the ardour born of anger and obstinacy in the encounter with the weight and violence of the magistrate and with the danger, or the care of his reputation, has not often induced a man to maintain, even to the stake, an opinion for which, among his friends and at liberty, he would not have been ready to burn the end of his finger.

[1] Like a small bark caught on the high seas when the wind is raging. — Catullus, XXV, 12.

(*a*) The shocks and stirrings which our soul receives through perturbations of the body can do much in her; but her own even more, which have so strong a hold upon her, that it can perhaps be maintained that she has no other action or motion than from the breath of her winds, and that, without their agitation, she would remain inactive, like a ship in the open sea, deprived of the succour of the winds.[1] And he who should maintain this, (*c*) following the sect of the Peripatetics, (*a*) would do us no great wrong, since it is recognised that the greater number of the finest actions of the soul proceed from, and have need of, this impulsion of the passions. Valour, they say, can not be perfected without the help of anger.

(*c*) Semper Ajax fortis, fortissimus tamen in furore.[2]

Nor do we assail evil-doers and enemies vigorously enough if we are not indignant; and it is thought that the advocate must inspire the judges with indignation, in order to obtain justice from them. Immoderate desires stirred Themistocles and Demosthenes, and have impelled philosophers to labours, vigils, and peregrinations; they lead us to honour, to learning, to health — profitable ends. And this faintheartedness of soul in enduring trouble and vexation serves to nourish penitence and repentance in the conscience, and to make us feel the scourges of God for our chastisement and the scourges of public correction. (*b*) Compassion acts as a spur to clemency, and prudence in protecting and restraining ourselves is awakened by our fear; and how many fine actions by ambition? how many by presumption? (*a*) No eminent and gallant virtue, in short, exists without some lawless excitement. May not this have been one of the reasons that moved the Epicureans to discharge God from all care and solicitude about our affairs, inasmuch as the very works of his kindness could not be executed for us without disturbing his repose by means of passions that are like prickings and solicitations that direct the soul to virtuous

[1] See Plutarch, *Of Moral Courage*.

[2] Ajax was always brave, but bravest in his madness. — Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, IV, 23. The following sentences are directly inspired by *Ibid.*, 19.

actions?[1] (*c*) Or, indeed, did they think otherwise, and regard them as storms which ignominiously turn aside the soul from its tranquillity? *Ut maris tranquillitas intelligitur, nulla, ne minima quidem, aura fluctus commovente; sic animi quietus et placatus status cernitur, quum perturbatio nulla est qua moveri queat.*[2]

(*a*) What differences of meaning and of reasonableness, what contrariety of ideas, the diversity of our passions presents to us! What assurance, then, can we have in a thing[3] so unstable and so shifting, subject by its nature to the sway of confusion, (*c*) never moving save at a forced and acquired pace? (*a*) If our judgement is at the mercy of sickness and of perturbation; if it is from want of wit and from foolhardiness that it is bound to receive its impression of things, what certainty can we expect from it?

(*c*) Is it not bold of philosophy to think that men produce their greatest effects, and those most nearly approaching divinity, when they are beside themselves, and mad, and insensate?[4] We are bettered by privation of our reason and by its torpor. The two natural ways to enter the cabinet of the gods, and there foresee the course of destiny, are madness and sleep. This is amusing to think upon; by the disorder which the passions bring into our reason, we become virtuous; by its extirpation, which madness or the image of death brings, we become prophets and seers. Never could I readily believe this. It is a simple extravagance, which sacred truth instilled into the philosophic mind, extorting from it, contrary to its own assertion, that the tranquil state of our soul, the state of composure, the most helpful state that it can acquire from philosophy, is not its best state. Our waking is more sleepy than sleep, our wisdom

[1] In 1580 to 1588: *Au moins cecy ne sçavons nous que trop, que les passions produisent infinies et perpetuelles mutations en nostre ame, et la tyrannisent merveilleusement. Le jugement d'un homme corroucé, ou de celuy qui est en crainte, est-ce le jugement qu'il aura tantost, quand il sera rassis?*

[2] As the tranquillity of the sea is perceived when no wind, not even the slightest breeze, ruffles the waves, so the calm and quiet of the soul is seen when there is no perturbation by which it can be moved. — Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, V, 6.

[3] The judgement? See the next sentence.

[4] See Cicero, *De Div.*, I, 57, and II, 48; Plato, *Phædrus* and *Timæus*.

more foolish than folly. Our dreams are worth more than our meditations. The worst abode that we can choose is in ourselves. But does not philosophy think that we have the wit to observe that the word which represents the spirit, when it is loosed from man, as so clear-sighted, so great, and so perfect, and, while it is still in man, as so earthly, ignorant, and tenebrious, is a word uttered by the spirit which is in earthly, ignorant, and tenebrious man, and consequently an untrustworthy and unbelievable word?

(*a*) I, being of an easy and heavy temperament, have no great experience of these violent agitations, of which the greater number take the soul by surprise, without giving it time to recognise itself. But the passion which is said to be born of idleness in the hearts of young men, although its progress is leisurely and with measured steps, manifests very clearly, to those who have tried to oppose its strength, the force of the conversion and change that our judgement suffers. I have in times past attempted to stiffen myself to resist and repel it (for I am so far from being of those who invite vices that I do not even follow them, if they do not carry me away); I perceived it come to life, increase, and enlarge, in spite of my resistance, and at last lay hold of me and possess me, with my eyes open and all alive, to such a degree that, as in drunkenness, the aspect of things began to seem to me other than as usual: I saw clearly the advantages of the things I was desiring become bigger and increase, augmented and puffed up by the breath of my imagination, the difficulties of my enterprise become easy and smooth, my reason and my conscience fall back; but, that fire having vanished, all in an instant, like the brightness of a flash of lightning, [I saw] my soul recover another sort of vision, another condition, and another judgement; the difficulties of withdrawal appeared to me great and insurmountable, and the things themselves of a far other nature and aspect than as the heat of desire had presented them to me. Which was most like the truth, Pyrrho knows not. We are never without sickness. Fevers have their hot and their cold turns; from the conditions of a burning attack we pass into the conditions of a shivering attack. (*b*) As far as I had been thrown forward, so far am I cast back;

Qualis ubi alterno procurrens gurgite pontus
Nunc ruit ad terras, scopulisque superjacit undam,
Spumeus, extremamque sinu perfundit arenam;
Nunc rapidus retro atque æstu revoluta resorbens
Saxa fugit, littusque vado labente relinquit.[1]

(*a*) Now, from the knowledge of this instability of mine, I have, by fortune, engendered in myself some steadiness of opinions, and have scarcely changed my earliest and inborn ones. For, whatever there may be in the new thing, I do not easily change, for fear of losing by the change. And since I am not capable of choosing, I take the choice of others and keep in the condition in which God has put me. Otherwise I should not know how to save myself from ceaseless shifting. Thus I have, by the favour of God, without agitation and trouble of conscience, remained wholly true to the ancient beliefs of our faith, through all the sects and schisms that our time has produced. The writings of the ancients — I mean the excellent writings, full and solid — persuade me, and carry me almost where they wish; he to whom I am listening seems always to me the most stable;[2] I find them all to be right, each in his turn, although they contradict one another. The facility of able minds to make whatever they please seem probable, and to find nothing so strange that they do not undertake to give it enough colour to deceive such unskilfulness as mine, shows plainly the weakness of their proof. The heavens and the stars were in motion for three thousand years; every one so believed until (*c*) Cleanthes the Samian,[3] or, according to Theophrastus, Nicetas the Syracusan,[4] (*a*) took upon himself to maintain that it was the earth that was moved (*c*) through the oblique circle of the Zodiac, revolving about its axis; (*a*) and, in our day,

[1] As when the sea, rushing with ebb and flow, now throws itself foaming on the land, and tosses its waves over the rocks, and waters with its curving flood the whole shore; now, rapidly retreating, engulfing again in its whirling depths the stones it brought, and leaves the beach bare. — Virgil, *Æneid*, XI, 624.

[2] *Le plus roide.*

[3] See Plutarch, *Of the face in the moon.*

[4] In 1580 to 1588: *jusques à ce qu'il y a environ 18. cent ans, quelqu'un.* See Cicero, *Academica*, II, 39. In some editions of Cicero the name is Hicetas.

Copernicus has so well established this doctrine that it is in common use, with all its astronomical consequences. What shall we conclude from this, except that it does not matter to us which of them may be true? And who can say that, a thousand years hence, a third theory will not overturn the two earlier ones?

> Sic volvenda ætas commutat tempora rerum;
> Quod fuit in pretio, fit nullo denique honore;
> Porro aliud succedit, et e contemptibus exit,
> Inque dies magis appetitur, floretque repertum
> Laudibus, et miro est mortales inter honore.[1]

Thus, when some new doctrine presents itself to us, we have great reason to distrust it, and to reflect that, before it was put forth, its opposite held sway; and, as that has been overthrown by this, it may happen hereafter that a third idea will be born, which will in like manner give battle to the second. Before the principles introduced by Aristotle [2] obtained credit, other principles satisfied human reason, as his satisfy us at this moment. What letters patent have these, what special privilege, that the progress of our invention should stop with them, and that to them, for all time to come, should belong the control of our belief? They are no more exempt from being pushed out of place [3] than their predecessors were. When a new argument is urged on me, I may consider that what I can not give a satisfactory answer to, another will answer satisfactorily; for to believe all the appearances that we can not explain away is great simplicity. It would come about, in that case, that with all the common people and the generality of men, their beliefs would be as variable as a weathercock; for their souls, being soft and unresisting, would be forced constantly to receive this and the other impression, the last always effacing the traces of the preceding one. He who finds himself at a loss

[1] Thus time in its revolution changes the season of things; what is prized falls wholly out of favour, and another thing takes its place and emerges from contempt; this is daily more coveted, and, when discovered, flourishes wonderfully in the praises and honour of men. — Lucretius, V, 1276.

[2] In 1580 to 1588: *de Matiere, Forme, et Privation.*

[3] *Exempts du boute-hors.*

should reply, following the legal style, that he will speak to his adviser about it, or apply to the wisest men from whom he received his instruction.

How long has the knowledge of the human body been in existence?[1] They say that a newcomer, one Paracelsus, is changing and overturning the whole system of the ancient rules, and declares that to this hour it has served only to make men die. I believe that he will easily verify this; but I consider that it would be no great wisdom to put my life to the proof of his newly acquired knowledge. We must not believe every one, says the precept, because by every one every thing can be said.

A man who openly confesses belief in these new ideas and in correction of physical conceptions[2] said to me, not long ago, that all the ancients had evidently been mistaken about the nature and movement of the winds; and this he would make me clearly perceive if I would hearken to him. After I had had a little patience in listening to his arguments, which were full of plausibility, "How then," I asked, "those who sailed by the rules of Theophrastus — did they go to the west when they set sail to the east? Did they go sidewise, or backward?" — "It was a matter of luck," he replied; "all the same, they were mistaken." I told him then that I liked better to follow facts than reasoning. Now, these are things which often conflict with one another; and I have been told that, in geometry, which thinks it has attained the highest point of certainty among the sciences, there are inevitable demonstrations subverting the truth of experience; as Jacques Peletier, when visiting me, told me that he had found two lines wending toward each other as if to join, which, nevertheless, he averred, could never, even to infinity, come to touch one another. And the Pyrrhonians employ their arguments and their reasoning only to destroy the verity of experience; and it is marvellous how far the suppleness of our reason has waited on them in this design of resisting the evidence of facts; for they affirm that we do not move, that we do not speak, that nothing has

[1] *Combien y a-t-il que la medecine est au monde?*

[2] *Un homme de cette profession de nouvelletez et de reformations physiques.*

weight or heat, with a force of argumentation equal to that with which we affirm the most probable-seeming things.

Ptolomeus, who was a great personage, established the boundaries of our world; all the ancient philosophers had thought that they had it measured, save some scattered islands which might have escaped their knowledge. It would have been Pyrrhonising, a thousand years ago, to cast a doubt upon the science of cosmography and the beliefs which were accepted by every one; (*b*) it was heresy to avouch the Antipodes; (*a*) behold in our time there has been discovered an infinite extent of terra firma — not an island or a single country, but a piece almost equal in size to that which we were acquainted with. The geographers of this age do not fail to assert that now all has been found and all is visible;

> Nam quod adest præsto, . . .
> . . . placet, et pollere videtur.[1]

It remains to be seen whether, if Ptolemy was mistaken in other days as to the foundation of his reasoning, it would not be foolish for me to rely now upon what these say about it; [2] (*c*) and whether it is not most probable that this great body that we call the world is a very different thing from what we judge it to be. Plato holds that it changes its aspect in all ways: that the heavens, the stars, and the sun sometimes reverse the motion that we see in them, changing the east to the west.[3] The Egyptian priests told Herodotus that, since the time of the first king, which was eleven thousand and more years before (and of all their kings they showed him the effigies in statues done from life), the sun had changed his course four times; that the sea and the land change into each other alternately; that the beginning of the world is undetermined.[4] Aristotle, Cicero say the same; and some

[1] For what we have at the moment is pleasing and seems to be the best. — Lucretius, V, 1412, 1413.

[2] In 1580 to 1588: *Aristote dict que toutes les opinions humaines ont este par le passé, et feront à l'advenir, infinies autres fois; Platon, qu'elles ont a renouveller et revenir en estre, apres trente six mille ans.*

[3] See Plato, *Politics*.

[4] See Herodotus, II, 142, 143.

one of our writers [1] says that the world has been, from all eternity, dying and being reborn, with many vicissitudes; and he calls as witnesses Solomon and Isaiah, to evade these gainsayings — that God was at one time a creator with nothing created; [2] that he was unoccupied; that he betook himself to occupations [3] in putting his hand to this work, and that, consequently, he is subject to change. In the most famous of the Greek schools,[4] the world is held to be a god made by another greater god, and is composed of a body, and of a soul which dwells in its centre, expanding by musical numbers to its circumference, divine, most blessed, most great, most wise, eternal. In it are other gods, — the earth, the sea, the stars, — which are linked together in an harmonious and never-ceasing movement and divine dance, sometimes meeting, sometimes drawing apart, concealing and revealing themselves, changing their position, now in front and now behind. Heraclitus affirmed that the world was composed of fire and, by the decree of fate, must some day blaze up and be resolved into fire, and some day be again reborn.[5] And Apuleius says of mankind: *Sigillatim mortales, cunctim perpetui.*[6]

Alexander wrote to his mother the tale told by an Egyptian priest, derived from their records,[7] witnessing to the antiquity of that immemorial race and comprising the veritable birth and progress of the other countries. Cicero and Diodorus said in their day that the Chaldæans had registers of more than four hundred thousand years; Aristotle, Pliny, and others, that Zoroaster lived six thousand years before the age of Plato. Plato says that the people of the city of Sais have written chronicles for eight thousand years, and that the city of Athens was built a thousand years before the

[1] Origen. Montaigne took this from Vivès's *Commentary* on St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, XII, 13.

[2] *Createur sans creature.*

[3] *Qu'il s'est desdict de son oisivetê.*

[4] That of Plato; see the *Timæus*, *passim.*

[5] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Heraclitus.*

[6] As individuals, they are mortal; as a whole, they are eternal. — Apuleius, *De Deo Socratis.* Montaigne took this from St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, XII, 10.

[7] *Leurs monumans.* See *Ibid.*, VIII, 5, and XII, 10.

said city of Sais;[1] (*b*) Epicurus, that, at the same time that things here are as we see them, they are wholly similar and of the same fashioning in many other worlds; which he would have said more confidently if he had seen the similitudes and correspondences of this new world of the West Indies with ours, present and past, in such strange instances.

(*c*) In truth, considering what we have learned of the manner of this terrestrial government, I have often marvelled to see the coincidence, at a very great distance of place and of time, of a vast number of unnatural popular opinions and of uncultivated customs and beliefs, which in no way seem to belong to our natural ideas.[2] Human wit is a great worker of miracles; but this relation has I know not what that is even more unlooked for; it is found also in names, in events, and in a thousand other things. (*b*) For we find nations that have never, so far as we know, heard of us, where circumcision was held in repute; where high functions and great governments were carried on by women without men;[3] where our fasts and Lent were reproduced, adding thereto abstinence from women; where our crosses, in divers shapes, were held in repute: here, they honoured with them their sepultures; there, they employed them — and notably the cross of St. Andrew — to guard themselves from nocturnal visions, and to place on the cradles of infants against enchantments; elsewhere they[4] found one made of wood, of great height, and adored as the god of rain, and this very far on the mainland. They found there a marked similitude to our confessors;[5] the use of mitres, the celibacy of priests, the art of prophesying by the entrails of sacrificed animals; (*c*) abstinence in their diet from every kind of flesh and fish;[6] (*b*) the custom among the priests, when officiating, of using a special tongue and not the vulgar one; and this conception, that the first god was expelled by a

[1] See St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, XII, 10 (Vivès's *Commentary*).

[2] *Discours*.

[3] Very many of these "facts" are taken from Gomara's *Histoire Générale des Indes*.

[4] That is, the discoverers.

[5] *Penitentiers*.

[6] This item, added in 1595, is taken from Osorio, *Histoire du Roi Emmanuel des Portuguais*.

second, his younger brother; that they were created with all benefits, whereof, for their sins, they have since been deprived, their territory changed, and their natural condition impaired; that they were of old submerged by the inundation of waters from heaven; that only a few families were then saved, who took refuge in the high caves of the mountains, which caves they closed, so that the water did not there enter, having imprisoned therein many kinds of animals; that, when they perceived that the rain had ceased, they sent out dogs, which having returned clean and wet, they judged that the water was not yet much lower; later, having sent out others and seeing them return muddy, they issued forth to repeople the world, which they found replenished only with serpents. In a certain place, they lighted upon the belief in a day of judgement, which caused them [1] to be highly angered with the Spaniards, who cast abroad the bones of the dead when searching for treasure in the burial-places, the people saying that those scattered bones could not easily be reunited. Traffic by barter, and not otherwise, and fairs and markets for that purpose; dwarfs and deformed persons, for adornment of the tables of princes; the practice of falconry according to the nature of their birds; tyrannical demands for assistance; [2] refinements of gardening; dances; jugglers' antics; instrumental music; coats-of-arms; tennis-courts; games of dice and of chance, at which they often became so heated as to stake themselves and their freedom; no other medicine than charms; the way of writing by figures; [3] belief in a sole first man, the father of all nations; adoration of a god who formerly lived as a man, in perfect chastity, fasting, and penance, preaching the law of nature and the ceremonies of religion, and who vanished from the world without a natural death; belief in giants; the habit of intoxicating themselves with their beverages and drinking as much as they could carry; religious ornaments, with delineations of skeletons and skulls; surplices, holy water, sprinklings; wives and servitors, who present themselves with emulation to be burned and buried with the de-

[1] That is, the natives.
[2] *Subsides tyranniques.*
[3] That is, hieroglyphics.

parted husband or master; the law that the eldest son should succeed to all the property, and no portion be reserved for the younger but obedience; a custom that, on promotion to a certain office of great authority, he who is promoted takes a new name and quits his own; to cast lime on the knee of the new-born child, saying to him: "From dust thou camest and to dust thou shalt return"; the art of augurs.

Those idle shadows of our religion which are seen in some instances bear witness to its dignity and divinity. Not only has it, in some sort, made its way into all the infidel nations on this side of the world by some kind of imitation, but among those barbarians also, by a general and supernatural inspiration. For there was found there, also, the belief in purgatory, but in a new form: what we ascribed to fire they ascribe to cold, and imagine souls to be purged and punished by the severity of an extreme coldness. And this example reminds me of another odd difference: car, comme il s'y trouva des peuples qui aymoyent a deffubler le bout de leur membre et en retranchoient la peau à la Mahumetane et à la Juifve, il s'y en trouva d'autres qui faisoient si grande conscience de le deffubler qu'à tout des petits cordons ils portoient leur peau bien soigneusement estiree et attachee au dessus, de peur que ce bout ne vit l'air. And likewise of this difference, that, whereas we honour kings and festivals by arraying ourselves in the best clothes we have, in some countries, to mark complete disparity and submission to their king, his subjects present themselves before him in their shabbiest garments, and, on entering the palace, throw some old torn cloak above their good apparel, so that all the splendour and adornment may be the master's.

But to proceed. (*a*) If Nature confines within the limits of her regular progress, like all other things, also the beliefs, the judgements and opinions of men; if they have their cycles,[1] their times, their birth, their death, like cabbages; if Heaven moves them and turns them at its will; what dominant and permanent authority shall we attribute to them? (*b*) If by experience we clearly perceive[2] that the character of our existence depends on the atmosphere, the climate, and the soil where we were born, not only our com-

[1] *Leur revolution.* [2] *Nous touchons à la main.*

plexion, stature, disposition, and demeanour, but also the faculties of the soul, (*c*) *et plaga cœli non solum ad robur corporum, sed etiam animorum facit*,[1] says Vegetius; and that the goddess who founded the city of Athens chose for its location a climate which made men discreet, as the priests of Egypt informed Solon: *Athenis tenue cœlum, ex quo etiam acutiores putantur Attici; crassum Thebis, itaque pingues Thebani et valentes;* [2] (*b*) in like manner, as fruits and animals are born differing, so men are born more or less warlike, just, temperate, and docile; here addicted to wine, elsewhere to theft or to lechery; here inclined to superstition, elsewhere to unbelief; (*c*) here to liberty, there to servitude; (*b*) with capacity for one kind of learning, or one art; dull-witted or intelligent, obedient or rebellious, good or bad, according to the influence of the place where they dwell; and take on a new nature if we change their location, like trees. This was the reason that Cyrus did not choose to allow the Persians to abandon their rugged and uneven country and betake themselves to another more gentle and more smooth, (*c*) saying that rich, soft soils produce soft men, and fertile soils unfertile minds.[3] (*b*) If we see that, by virtue of some celestial influence, sometimes one art, one opinion flourishes, sometimes another; that a certain age produces certain natures and inclines the human race to this or that bent; that the minds of men are, like our fields, sometimes flourishing, sometimes barren, what becomes of all those fine prerogatives that we flatter ourselves about? Since a wise man may be mistaken, and a hundred men and many nations, — and, verily, human nature, in our opinion, has been mistaken for many ages about this or about that, — what assurance have we that sometimes it is not mistaken, (*c*) and that in this age it may not be mistaken?

(*a*) It seems to me that, among other evidences of our inability, this deserves not to be forgotten: that man can not,

[1] And the region of the air not only contributes to strength of body, but to that of mind. — Vegetius, I, 2. Montaigne took this citation from the *Politics* of J. Lipsius.

[2] The air of Athens is subtle; and it is for this reason, some think, that the Athenians are sharp-witted; so the air of Thebes is thick, and the Thebans are dull and sturdy. — Cicero, *De Fato*, IV.

[3] See Plutarch, *Apothegms of Kings*, etc., and Herodotus, IX, 122.

even in desire, find what is needful for him; that, not in possession, but by imagination and by wish, we could not be in agreement as to what we have need of, to satisfy us. Let our thought fashion [1] at its pleasure, it will not be able even to desire what is meet for this — to give satisfaction;

(*b*) quid enim ratione timemus
Aut cupimus? quid tam dextro pede concipis, ut te
Conatus non pœniteat votique peracti? [2]

(*c*) This is why Socrates asked the gods for nothing except to give him what they knew to be salutary for him.[3] And the prayer of the Lacedæmonians, public and private, was simply that good and fair things might be granted them, leaving the selection and choice of these to the divine judgement: [4] —

(*b*) Conjugium petimus partumque uxoris; at illi
Notum qui pueri qualisque futura sit uxor.[5]

(*a*) And the Christian prays to God that his will be done, to avoid falling into the dilemma which the poets narrate of King Midas. He besought the gods that every thing he touched might be changed into gold. His prayer was granted: his wine was gold, his bread gold, and the feathers of his bed, and golden his shirt and garments; so that he found himself crushed by the fruition of his desire, and endowed with an intolerable benefaction. He had need to unpray his prayers: —

Attonitus novitate mali, divesque miserque
Effugere optat opes, et quæ modo voverat, odit.[6]

[1] *Tailler et coudre.*

[2] With what reason do we fear or desire? What is so fortunately conceived that you do not repent the effort, or even the accomplished desire? — Juvenal, X, 4.

[3] See Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, I, 3.2.

[4] See Plato, *Second Alcibiades*.

[5] We pray for a spouse, and that the wife may have children; but only the gods know what the children and what the future wife will be. — Juvenal, X, 352.

[6] Astonished at the strangeness of the evil, at once rich and poor, he would fain flee wealth, and detests that for which he but lately prayed. — Ovid, *Metam.*, XI, 128.

(*b*) A word of myself. I besought of Fortune, above all things in my youth, the order of Saint Michel; for it was then the highest mark of honour for the French nobility, and very rare. She accorded it to me in a droll fashion. Instead of raising and exalting me in my station to attain it, she treated me much more graciously: she debased it and brought it down to my shoulders, and lower.[1] (*c*) Cleobis and Bito, Trophonius and Agamedes, having besought, those of their goddess, these of their god, a guerdon worthy of their piety, received the gift of death, so different from our own are celestial ideas regarding our needs.[2] (*a*) God could confer upon us riches, honours, even life and health, sometimes to our hurt; for all that is agreeable to us is not always salutary for us. If, instead of recovery, he sends us death or aggravation of our ills, — *virga tua et baculus tuus ipsa me consolata sunt*,[3] — he does it by the judgement of his providence, which discerns what is fit for us much more unerringly than we can do; and we should take it in good part as from a very wise and very friendly hand;

> (*b*) si consilium vis
> Permittes ipsis expendere numinibus, quid
> Conveniat nobis, rebusque sit utile nostris;
> Charior est illis homo quam sibi.[4]

For, to beseech honours and offices from them [5] is to beseech them to cast you into a battle, or into a game of dice, or some other thing of which the issue is unknown to you and the fruit doubtful.[6]

(*a*) There is no conflict so violent among philosophers, and so bitter, as that which arises over the question of the supreme good of man, (*c*) from which, according to Varro's reckoning, two hundred and eighty-eight sects came into

[1] See Chap. 7, pp. 102 ff., *supra*.

[2] See Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, I, 47; Herodotus, I, 31; Plutarch, *Consolation to Apollonius*.

[3] Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. — *Psalm* XXIII, 4.

[4] If you wish my counsel, let the gods consider what is meet for us and what things are profitable for us; man is more dear to them than to himself. — Juvenal X, 346–348, 350.

[5] That is, from the divine powers.

[6] See Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, I, 3.2.

being.[1] *Qui autem de summo bono dissentit, de tota philosophiæ ratione dissentit.*[2]

(*a*) Tres mihi conviviæ prope dissentire videntur,
Poscentes vario multum diversa palato;
Quid dem? quid non dem? Renuis tu quod jubet alter;
Quod petis, id sane est invisum acidumque duobus.[3]

So Nature should reply to their contestation and disputes.

Some say that our well-being has its seat in virtue, others in pleasure, others again in submission to nature; this one, in learning; (*c*) that one, in having no suffering; (*a*) this other, in not allowing oneself to be led away by appearances (and to this idea, that other of ancient Pythagoras[4] seems akin:

Nil admirari prope res est una, Numaci,
Solaque quæ possit facere et servare beatum,[5] —

which is the goal of the Pyrrhonian school). (*c*) Aristotle attributes to magnanimity the being surprised at nothing.[6] (*a*) And Arcesilaus said that resistance[7] and an upright and inflexible state of the judgement are goods, but yieldings and compliances[8] are vices and evils. It is true that in asserting this as axiomatic he departed from Pyrrhonism. The Pyrrhonians, when they say that the supreme good is ataraxy, which is immobility of the judgement, do not mean it affirmatively; but the same impulse[9] which makes them

[1] See St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, XIX, 2.

[2] Now he who dissents with regard to the highest good raises an argument about the whole subject of philosophy. — Cicero, *De Fin.*, V, 5.

[3] They seem to me, as it were, like three youths at table, who ask for very different dishes according to their different tastes. What shall I offer? what shall I not offer? You decline what another demands; and what you ask for is entirely distasteful and disagreeable to the other two. — Horace, *Epistles*, II, 2.61.

[4] See Plutarch, *Of Hearing*.

[5] To be perturbed by nothing is almost the sole means, O Numacius, that can make and maintain happiness. — Horace, *Epistles*, I, 6.1. The true reading is "Numici."

[6] That is, loftiness of soul. See Aristotle, *Ethics*, IV, 3.

[7] *Les soustenemens.*

[8] *Les consentements et appliances.* See Sextus Empiricus, *Hypot.*, I, 33.

[9] *Bransle de leur ame.*

shrink from precipices, and shelter themselves from the evening air, itself suggests this idea to them and makes them reject any other conception of it.

(*b*) How much I wish that while I live, either some other, or Justus Lipsius, the most learned man who is left to us, of a most fine and judicious mind, truly akin to my Turnebus,[1] might have the desire and the health and enough leisure to make a compilation of the opinions of the ancient philosophers according to their divisions and their classes, as honestly and carefully as we can distinguish them, on the subject of our being and of our morals; their controversies, the influence and the successions of the different sides, the relations of the lives of the authors and sectators to their precepts, in memorable and typical circumstances. What an admirable and useful work that would be!

(*a*) For the rest, if it is from ourselves that we derive the ordering of our morals, into what confusion do we thrust ourselves! For that which our reason counsels us as having most appearance of truth is, in general, for every one to obey the laws of his country, (*b*) which is the advice of Socrates, inspired, he says, by divine counsel.[2] (*a*) And what does our reason mean by that, if not that our duty has only a casual prescription? Truth ought to have a similar aspect everywhere. If man knew any uprightness and justice which had body and a true being, he would not connect it with the condition of the customs of this or that country; it would not be from the opinions held in Persia or in India that virtue would take shape. Nothing is subject to more constant agitation than the laws. Since I was born I have seen those of the English, our neighbours, altered three or four times, not only in state matters, where one is willing to dispense with stability, but in the most important of all matters, namely, religion.[3] By which I am mortified and vexed, the more because it is a nation with which those of my pro-

[1] See Book I, chap. 25 (Vol. I, p. 187).

[2] In 1580 to 1588: *comme l'oracle de Socrates luy avoit apris, que exactement faire devoir de pieté n'est autre chose que servir Dieu selon l'usage de sa nation.* See Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, I, 3.1.

[3] In 1534 Henry VIII and his successors were recognized by Parliament as sole heads of the English Church; 1553, accession of Queen Mary; 1558, accession of Queen Elizabeth.

vince have had in former days so intimate a connection,[1] that there still remain in my family [2] some traces of our old kinship. (*c*) And here in France I have seen a certain thing, which was formerly a capital offence, become lawful; [3] and those of us who are dependent upon others are in danger, from the uncertainty of the fortunes of war, of being guilty some day of high treason, human and divine, our justice falling into the power of injustice, and after being in possession for a few years, becoming essentially different.

How could that ancient god [4] more clearly indicate in human knowledge ignorance of the divine being, and teach men that religion was merely a thing of their imagining, adapted to bind their society together, than by declaring, as he did, to those who sought, about this, the instruction of his tripod, that the true worship for each man was that which he found to be observed by the custom of the place where he was? O God, what obligation are we not under to the benignity of our sovereign Creator for having shown our faith the folly of [5] these wanderings and uncertain ceremonies, and for having placed it upon the everlasting foundation of his holy word!

(*a*) What, then, will philosophy say to us in this emergency? That we should follow the laws of our country? That is to say, that fluctuating sea of the opinions of a people or of a prince, which will depict justice to me in as many colours and reshape it in as many forms as there may be in themselves changes of passion? I can not have so flexible a judgement. What goodness is that which I saw yesterday in repute, and to-morrow to be no longer so; (*c*) and which the crossing of a river makes criminal? [6] What truth is that which those mountains bound, which is falsehood to the world beyond them?

[1] Guyenne belonged to England from 1152 to 1453.

[2] *En ma maison.* [3] That is, the Reformed faith.

[4] Apollo. See Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, I, 3.1.

[5] *Pour avoir desniaise nostre creance de.*

[6] In 1580 to 1588: *qui en l'espace d'un jour a peu recevoir un si estrange changement, d'estre devenu vice.* It is evident, from the difference in expression between the early texts and 1595, that Montaigne rewrote this sentence after reading a page of Erasmus in the *Querela Pacis:* "Ceu rerum veritas commutetur, ita quædam scita non trajiciunt mare, quædam non superant Alpes, quædam non tranant Rhenum."

(*a*) But they are amusing when, to give some distinctness to the laws, they say that there are some that are fixed, perpetual, and unchangeable, which they call natural laws, which are imprinted in the human race by the nature of their proper essence. And of these, some make the number to be three, some four; some more, some less: a sign that this badge is as doubtful as the rest. Now they are so unfortunate (for how can I call it other than unfortunate that, of so infinite a number of laws, there is not at least one to be found that fortune [*c*] and the hazard of fate [*a*] have permitted to be universally accepted by the agreement of all nations?), they are, I say, so ill off that of these three or four selected laws there is not one single one that is not opposed and disavowed, not by one nation, but by many. Now the only likely sign whereby they could demonstrate some laws to be natural would be the universality of their confirmation. For what nature had veritably ordained for us, that we should doubtless follow by common agreement. And not only every nation, but every private man, would feel the force and violence which would be put upon him by any one who desired to impel him in opposition to that law. Let them bring before my eyes one of this sort. Protagoras and Aristo found no other essential qualities in the justice of laws than the authority and judgement of the legislature; and maintained that, apart from this, the good and the fitting lost their nature, and became but empty names of unimportant things. Thrasimachus in Plato considers that there is no other right than what is well for one's superiors.[1] In nothing else is the world so diverse as in customs and laws. One thing is abominable here which elsewhere brings praise, as in Lacedæmon cunning in thievery. Marriages between those of the same family are forbidden here as a capital crime; elsewhere they are held in honour:

> gentes esse feruntur
> In quibus et nato genitrix et nata parenti
> Jungitur, et pietas geminato crescit amore.[2]

[1] See Plato, *Republic*, book I.

[2] There are said to be peoples among whom mother and son, and father and daughter, are wedded, and natural affection is increased by the double bond. — Ovid, *Metam.*, X, 331.

The murder of children, the murder of fathers, community of wives, commerce in robbery, license in all sorts of sensualities — there is nothing, in short, so extreme that it is not found to be allowed by the customs of some nation. (*b*) It may be believed that there are natural laws, such as may be seen in the other creatures; but in us they are lost, since this fine human reason everywhere intrudes, to master and command, confusing and confounding the aspect of things in accordance with its frivolousness and mutability. (*c*) *Nihil itaque amplius nostrum est; quod nostrum dico, artis est.*[1]

(*a*) Subjects have divers appearances, divers points to be considered; from this principally is engendered the diversity of opinions. One nation regards a subject by one aspect and stops at that; another by another. There is nothing so horrible to imagine as eating one's father. The nations which, in ancient times, had this custom always held it to be a testimonial of filial piety and true affection; seeking thereby to give to their progenitors the most worthy and honourable sepulture, taking into themselves and, as it were, into their marrow, the bodies and remains of their fathers, vivifying them in some sort, and regenerating them by the transmutation into their own living flesh by means of digestion and nourishment. It is easy to judge what cruelty and abomination it would have seemed, to men permeated and imbued with that superstition, to cast the remains of their fathers to the corruption of the earth and to the nourishment of animals and worms.[2] Lycurgus considered, in theft, the alertness, discretion, boldness, and skill there is in purloining from one's neighbour at unawares, and the utility that redounds to the public in each man's consequently looking more carefully to the safe keeping of what belongs to him; and he considered that, from this double education, in attack and in defence, would ensue profit for military discipline (which was the principal science and virtue in which he desired to train that nation) of greater importance than the irregularity and injustice of acquiring the goods of another.[3]

[1] And so, nothing is any longer ours; what I call ours is a matter of convention. — Cicero, *De Fin.*, V, 21. The original text reads: *Sed virtutem ipsam nihil amplius. Itaque nostrum est*, etc.

[2] See Book I, chap. 23 (Vol. I, p. 155).

[3] See Plutarch, *Life of Lycurgus.*

Dionysius the tyrant offered Plato a robe of the Persian fashion, long, figured,[1] and perfumed; Plato declined it, saying that, being born a man, he would not willingly clothe himself in a woman's robe; but Aristippus accepted it with the rejoinder that no apparel could infect an unsullied mind.[2] (*c*) His friends taunted him with his unmanliness in taking it so little to heart that Dionysius had spat in his face. "Fishermen," he said, "put up with being bathed by the waves from head to foot, to catch a gudgeon." [3] Diogenes was washing his cabbages, and seeing him pass, cried, "If you knew how to live on cabbages, you would not pay court to a tyrant." To which Aristippus retorted: "If you knew how to live among men, you would not wash cabbages." [4] Thus reason justifies differing manifestations.[5] (*b*) It is a jar with two handles and can be grasped by either one.

> Bellum, O terra hospita, portas;
> Bello armantur equi, bellum hæc armenta minantur.
> Sed tamen iidem olim curru succedere sueti
> Quadrupedes, et frena jugo concordia ferre;
> Spes est pacis.[6]

(*c*) Solon, being exhorted not to shed vain and bootless tears for the death of his son, said: "But it is because they are vain and bootless that I rightfully shed them." [7] Socrates' wife exasperated her lamentation by this consideration: "Oh, how unjustly do those wicked judges put him to death!" "Would you, then, prefer that it should be justly?" he answered her.[8]

[1] *Damasquinée.*

[2] *Corrompre un chaste courage.* See Sextus Empiricus, *Hypot.*, III, 24; Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Aristippus.*

[3] See Diogenes Laertius, *Ibid.*

[4] See *Ibid.*

[5] *Voyla comant la raison fournit d'apparance à divers effects.* In 1580 to 1588: *Voyla comme ils avoyent tous deux raison de divers effects* (that is, both were right).

[6] O Land that dost receive us, thou hast the air of war. This troop of horses armed for war portends war. But yet these same beasts are wont sometimes to come under the yoke and bear the harness of a car; there is hope of peace. — Virgil, *Æneid*, III, 539.

[7] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Solon.*

[8] See Idem, *Life of Socrates.*

(*a*) We have our ears bored; the Greeks considered that a badge of servitude.[1] We conceal ourselves to enjoy our wives; the Indians do it in public. The Scythians sacrificed strangers in their temples; elsewhere temples are places of refuge.[2]

(*b*) Inde furor vulgi, quod numina vicinorum
Odit quisque locus, cum solos credat habendos
Esse deos quos ipse colit.[3]

(*a*) I have heard of a judge who, when he met with a sharp conflict of opinion between Bartolus and Baldus,[4] and some subject confused by many disagreements, wrote in the margin of his book: "Question for the friend"; that is to say, that the truth was so entangled and so contested, that in such a cause he could favour whichever one of the parties it might seem well to him to favour. It was only from lack of wit and perception that he could not write everywhere: "Question for the friend." The lawyers and judges of our day find in all causes bias sufficient to adjust them as seems well to them. In a science so infinite, depending on the authority of so many opinions, and of a nature so open to caprice,[5] it can not be that there does not arise an extreme confusion of judgements. Thus there is hardly any suit so clear that there are not found differing opinions regarding it. As to that about which one body of men has given a decree, another body of men gives a contrary decree; and itself, at another time, still a contrary one. Of which we see frequent examples in the license (which egregiously mars the solemn authority and lustre of our justice) not to abide by the sentence, but to run from judge to judge to decide the same cause.

As for the freedom of philosophic opinions touching vice and virtue, that is a thing which need not be enlarged upon,

[1] See Sextus Empiricus, *Hypot.*, III, 24.

[2] See *Ibid.*, I, 14; III, 24.

[3] Hence the madness of the common people, each locality hating the gods of his neighbours, and believing that the only true gods are those which are there worshipped. — Juvenal, XV, 37.

[4] Two eminent Italian jurisconsults of the fourteenth century.

[5] *Et d'un subject si arbitraire;* that is, depending on the discretion of the judge.

and about which there are many opinions that are better unspoken than published to weak minds. (*b*) Arcesilaus disoit n'estre considerable en la paillardise, de quel coste et par ou on le fut.[1] (*c*) *Et obscœnas voluptates, si natura requirit, non genere, aut loco, aut ordine, sed forma, ætate, figura metiendas Epicurus putat.*[2] — *Ne amores quidem sanctos a sapiente alienos esse arbitrantur.*[3] — *Quæramus ad quam usque ætatem juvenes amandi sint.*[4] These last two Stoic passages, and the upbraiding by Dicearchus of Plato himself about this matter,[5] show to what degree the soundest philosophy permits licenses alien to common usage and excessive.

(*a*) The laws derive their authority from possession and custom; it is dangerous to trace them back to their origin; they increase in breadth and dignity as they flow on, like our rivers: follow them up-stream to their source — it is only a little spring, hardly recognisable, which becomes thus much prouder and stronger by age. Look at the considerations that, in old time, first set in motion this mighty torrent, fraught with authority, inspiring dread and veneration: you will find them so slight and so weak that it is no wonder if the judgements of those people who weigh every thing and trace it back to reason, and who accept nothing on authority and trust, are often far removed from popular judgements. It is no wonder if people who take for their pattern the primal image of nature, in most of their opinions diverge from the common path. As for example: few of them [6] would have approved the restricted conditions of our marriages; (*c*) and most of them wished wives to be in common and without ties. (*a*) They rejected our customary

[1] See Plutarch, *Rules concerning health.*

[2] And Epicurus holds that, if nature demands indulgence in the pleasures of love, they should be guided, not in respect to birth or rank or condition, but in respect to personal qualities, age, and appearance. — Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, V, 33.

[3] Nor, in truth, that pure loves are to be judged unsuitable for the sage. — Idem, *De Fin.*, III, 20.

[4] Let us consider to what age the young should be loved. — Seneca, *Epistle* 123.15.

[5] See Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, IV, 34.

[6] That is, few of the philosophers of old times.

observances.[1] Chrysippus said that a philosopher will make a dozen somersaults in public, yes, and without breeches, for a dozen olives.[2] (*c*) He would hardly have advised Clisthenes to refuse the fair Agariste, his daughter, to Hippoclides, because he had seen him stand on his head on a table.[3] Metrocles somewhat carelessly broke wind when arguing in the presence of his scholars, and kept himself hid in his house, for shame, until Crates visited him, and, adding to his consolations and reasonings the example of his own liberty, undertaking to break wind in rivalry with him, he removed his scruples, and furthermore led him to his own more free Stoic sect, away from the more mannerly Peripatetic sect which he had hitherto followed.[4]

What we call decency — the not venturing to do openly what it is decent for us to do in secret — they called foolishness; and to be so delicate as to disown and be silent about acts which nature, custom, and our appetites publish and proclaim, they considered vice. Et leur sembloit que c'estoit affoler les mysteres de Venus que de les oster du retire sacraire de son temple pour les exposer à la veue du peuple, et que tirer ses jeus hors du rideau, c'estoit les avilir (c'est une espece de pois que la honte; la recelation, reservation, circonscription, parties de l'estimation); que la volupté tres ingenieusement faisoit instance sous le masque de la vertu, de n'estre prostituée au milieu des carrefours, foulée des pieds et des yeux de la commune, trouvant à dire la dignité et commodité de ses cabinets accostumez. (*a*) Hence some say that to do away with the public brothels is not only to spread abroad the lechery that was allotted to that place, but by difficulty to spur men on to that vice.

Mœchus es Aufidiæ, qui vir, Corvine, fuisti;
Rivalis fuerat qui tuus, ille vir est.

[1] In 1580 to 1588: *Ils refusoient et desdaignoient la pluspart de nos ceremonies. Chacun a ouy parler de la des hontée façon de vivre des philosophes Cyniques.*

[2] Perhaps an inexact memory of a passage in Plutarch, *Contradictions of the Stoics:* "He [Chrysippus] says that he will turn three somersaults if some one will give him a talent."

[3] See Herodotus, VI, 129.

[4] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Metrocles.*

Cur aliena placet tibi, quæ tua non placet uxor?
Nunquid securus non potes arrigere? [1]

This experience is diversified in countless examples.

Nullus in urbe fuit tota qui tangere vellet
Uxorem gratis, Cæciliane, tuam,
Dum licuit; sed nunc, positis custodibus, ingens
Turba fututorum est. Ingeniosus homo es.[2]

On demandoit à un philosophe qu'on surprit à mesme, ce qu'il faisoit. Il respondit tout froidement: "Je plante un homme," ne rougissant non plus d'estre rencontré en cela que si on l'eust trouvé plantant des aulx. Solon was, they say, the first who, by his laws, made it lawful for women to make public traffic of their bodies.[3]

(*c*) C'est, comme j'estime, d'une opinion trop tendre et respectueuse, qu'un grand et religieus auteur [4] tient cette action si necesserement obligee à l'occultation et à la vergouigne, qu'en la license des embrassements cyniques il ne se peut persuader que la besouigne en vint à sa fin, ains qu'elle s'arretoit à representer des mouvemens lascifs seulement, pour maintenir l'impudance de la profession de leur escole; et que, pour eslancer ce que la honte avoit contreint et retiré, il leur estoit encore apres besouin de chercher l'ombre. Il n'avoit pas veu asses avant en leur desbauche. Car Diogenes, exerçant en publiq sa masturbation, faisoit souhait en presence du peuple assistant, qu'il peut ainsi saouler son ventre en le frottant. A ceus qui luy demandoient pourquoi il ne cherchoit lieu plus commode à manger qu'en pleine rue, "C'est," il respondoit, "que j'ay faim en pleine

[1] You who were Aufidia's husband, Corvinus, are now her lover; he who was your rival is her husband. Why is it that she pleases you now that she belongs to another, who did not please you as your wife? — Martial, III, 70.

[2] There was no one in the whole city who would touch your wife, Cæcilianus, when it was easy; but now, being guarded, there is a great crowd of gallants. You are a clever man. — Martial, I, 74.

[3] This last sentence was omitted here in 1595, to be inserted later, in Book III, chap. 5. It is derived from C. Agrippa, *Of the uncertainty and vanity of learning.*

[4] St. Augustine. See *De Civ. Dei*, XIV, 20.

rue." [1] Les femes philosophes, qui se mesloient à leur secte, se mesloient aussi à leur personne en tout lieu, sans discretion; et Hipparchia ne fut receue en la societe de Crates qu'en condition de suivre en toutes choses les us et costumes de sa regle.[2] These philosophers set the highest value upon virtue, and rejected all other rules than those of morality; wherefore in all actions they attributed supreme authority, above the laws, to the judgement [3] of their sage: and set no other restraint upon the pleasures of the senses than moderation and protection of the liberty of others.

(*a*) Heraclitus and Protagoras, because wine seems bitter to the sick and pleasant to the well, because the oar is crooked in the water and straight to those who see it only out of the water, and from similar opposed effects in things, reasoned that all things had in them the causes of these effects, and that there was in wine some bitterness which was related to the sick man's taste; that the oar had a certain curve related to him who saw it in the water.[4] And so with all the rest. Which is equivalent to saying that all is in every thing, and consequently no special quality in any one; for there is no special quality where there is every thing.[5] This theory brought to my mind the experience which we have that there is no meaning or aspect, either straight or bitter or sweet or curved, which the human mind does not find in the writings that it undertakes to search in. From the most clear, pure, and perfect utterance that can be imagined, how much falsity and untruth has been derived? what heresy has not found therein sufficient grounds and testimonies to begin its course and to maintain itself? It is for this reason that the authors of such errors are never willing to depart from the proof afforded by the testimony of the interpretation of words. A person of high position, wishing to confirm to me by authority the quest of the philosopher's stone, into which he had entered deeply, lately alleged to me five or six passages of the Bible upon which he

[1] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Diogenes.*
[2] See Idem, *Life of Hipparchia.*
[3] *A l'election.*
[4] See Sextus Empiricus, *Hypot.*, I, 29 and 32.
[5] *Et par consequent rien en aucune; car rien n'est ou tout est.*

said that he had primarily founded himself for the easing of his conscience (for he is of the ecclesiastical profession); and in truth the idea was not only amusing, but also very fittingly made use of for the defence of that fine science. In this way is acquired the repute of the fables of divination. There is no prognosticator, if he has sufficient weight for it to be thought worth while to turn his leaves, and to seek carefully all the twists and aspects of his words, whom we can not make say whatever we please, as with the Sibyls. For there are so many methods of interpretation that it is hard for an ingenious wit not to come across, in every subject, either obliquely or directly, some manner of expression [1] that will serve his argument.

(*c*) Therefore is it that the cloudy and vague style is found in such frequent and ancient use. Let the author be able to succeed in attracting posterity and occupying it with himself (which not merely ability, but, as much or more, the fortuitous interest of the subject may achieve); as to the rest, if he exposes himself, from stupidity or from subtlety, somewhat obscurely and in diverse ways, that matters not at all. A number of minds, sifting and shaking his work, will strain from it a quantity of conceptions, some in accordance with his, some on one side of his, some opposed to his, which will all do him honour. He will find himself enriched by means of his disciples, like the university regents at the Landit.[2]

(*a*) It is this which has given value to many worthless things; which has brought into credit many writings and laden them with every sort of wished-for matter; one and the same thing receiving thousands and thousands, as many as we please, of diverse forms and considerations. (*c*) Is it possible that Homer intended to say all that he has been made to say; and that he was embodied in so many and such diverse figures, that the theologians, legislators, soldiers, philosophers, people of every kind who treat of matters of

[1] *Quelque air.*

[2] "Landit" was the name of a great fair, formerly held, in June, near St. Denis, lasting fifteen days. The salaries of the professors of the University were paid by the scholars on the first day, with a public ceremony.

learning, however diversely and contradictorily they treat them, lean upon him, referring to him about these matters: master general of all functions, works, and workers; adviser general in all undertakings? (*a*) Whoever has had need of oracles and predictions has found them there at his service. A learned personage, and a friend of mine — it is wonderful how many and what admirable sayings he produces therefrom in favour of our religion; and he can not easily relinquish the opinion that such was Homer's design (yet that author is as familiar to him as to any man of our day). (*c*) And what he finds in support of our religion, many in ancient times found in support of theirs.

See how Plato is handled and moved about. Every one, doing honour to himself by adapting him to his own views, places him on whichever side he desires to have him. They keep him in action and bring him into all the new beliefs that the world receives; and make him differ from himself according to the different course of things. They interpret him as rejecting customs lawful in his day, because they are unlawful in ours. All this eagerly and powerfully, in the measure that the interpreter's mind is powerful and eager.

(*a*) From the same basis that Heraclitus had, and uttered that saying of his that all things had in them the aspects that were found in them, Democritus derived an entirely contrary conclusion: that things had in them nothing at all of what we found in them; and because honey was sweet to one and bitter to another, he argued that it was neither sweet nor bitter. The Pyrrhonians said that they did not know whether it was sweet or bitter, or neither one nor the other, or both;[1] for they always attain to the highest point of uncertainty. (*c*) The Cyrenaics held that nothing was perceptible externally, and that that only was perceptible which touched us inwardly, as dolour and pleasure; recognising neither sound nor colour, but certain impressions only which come to us from them; and that man's judgement had no other ground.[2] Protagoras deemed that to be true for each man which seems to each man. The Epicureans place all power of judgement in the senses and in knowledge of

[1] See Sextus Empiricus, *Hypot.*, I, 30.
[2] See Cicero, *Academica*, II, 24.

things and in pleasure.[1] Plato would have all judgement of truth, and truth itself, taken away from common beliefs [2] and physical perceptions, to appertain to the mind and to cogitation.[3]

(*a*) This train of thought [4] has led me to the consideration of the senses, wherein lie the greatest source and proof of our ignorance. Every thing that is known is unquestionably known by the ability of the knower; for, since the judgement is derived from the mental activity [5] of him who judges, it is right that he should perfect that activity by his resources and will, not by outside constraint, as would be the case if we knew things by the force, and from the law, of their essential being. Now, all knowledge makes its way in us through the senses: they are our masters, —

(*b*) Via qua munita fidei
Proxima fert humanum in pectus templaque mentis.[6]

(*a*) Learning begins with them and is determined by them.[7] In fact, we should know no more than a stone if we did not know that there is sound, odour, light, savour, measure, weight, softness, hardness, sharpness, colour, smoothness, breadth, depth. Here are the frame and the origins of the whole structure of our learning. (*c*) And, according to some, learning is nothing else than perception.[8] (*a*) Whoever can force me to contradict the senses, he has me by the throat, he could not make me fall back further. The senses are the beginning and the end of human knowledge.

Invenies primis ab sensibus esse creatam
Notitiam veri, neque sensus posse refelli.
Quid majore fide porro quam sensus haberi
Debet? [9]

[1] See Cicero, *Academica*, II, 46.

[2] *Retiree des opinions.*

[3] Plato's belief is summarised from the *Phædo* and the *Theætetus*.

[4] *Ce propos.* [5] *De l'operation.*

[6] The path by which belief finds its nearest way into the human heart and into the regions of the mind. — Lucretius, V, 102.

[7] *Et se resout en eux.* [8] *Sentiment.*

[9] You will find that the knowledge of the true is derived first from the senses, and the senses can not be refuted. In what should we have greater confidence than in them? — Lucretius, IV, 478, 479, 482, 483.

Let as little as possible be attributed to them — it will always be necessary to allow them this: that by their means and agency all our instruction makes its way. Cicero says that Chrysippus, having attempted to depreciate the power of the senses and their value, put before himself opposing arguments and objections, so forcible that he could not answer them.[1] Whereupon Carneades, who maintained the opposite side, boasted of making use of the very weapons and words of Chrysippus to combat him; and because of this, cried out to him: "O unfortunate man, your strength has defeated you." [2] There is no greater absurdity, to our thinking, than to maintain that fire does not warm, that light does not illuminate, that there is no weight or solidity in iron, which are pieces of knowledge that the senses bring us; there is in man no belief or learning that can be compared to this knowledge in certainty.

My first consideration on the subject of the senses is that I question whether man is supplied with all natural senses.[3] I see many animals who live a complete and perfect life, some without sight, others without hearing; who knows whether for us also there be not lacking one, two, three, or many other senses? For, if some one of them is lacking, our judgement [4] can not discover the default. It is the privilege of the senses to be the extreme limit of our perception. There is nothing beyond them that can assist us in discerning them; nor, indeed, can one sense discern another.

(*b*) An poterunt oculos aures reprehendere, an aures
Tactus? an hunc porro tactum sapor arguet oris,
An confutabunt nares, oculive revincent? [5]

(*a*) They all together form the outermost line of our ability;

seorsum cuique potestas
Divisa est, sua vis cuique est.[6]

[1] See Cicero, *Academica*, II, 27.

[2] See Plutarch, *Contradictions of the Stoics*.

[3] The substance of the next few pages was suggested by Sextus Empiricus, *Hypot.*, I, 14.

[4] *Nostre discours*.

[5] Can the ears correct the eyes, or the touch the ears? Can the taste call in question the touch, or can the scent refute, or the eyes controvert it? — Lucretius, IV, 486.

[6] To each is assigned its separate power, to each its own strength. — *Ibid.*, 489.

It is impossible to make a man who was born blind conceive that he does not see; impossible to make him desire sight and regret his lack of it. Wherefore we should derive no assurance from the fact that our soul is content and satisfied with those senses that we have, considering that she has not the means of feeling her infirmity and imperfection in this respect, since it is a part of her.[1] It is impossible to say aught to this blind man, of reasoning, argument, or similitude, which can possess his imagination with any apprehension of light, of colour, and of vision. There is nothing in the background which can testify to that sense. Those of the blind from birth whom we find wishing to see — it is not from understanding what it is they ask for: they have learned from us that they lack something, that they have something to wish for which we have, (*c*) which they name rightly, and its effects and consequences; (*a*) but, nevertheless, they do not know what it is, nor at all apprehend it.

I have known a gentleman of good family, blind from birth, or, at least, blind from such an age that he knows not what sight is: he so little understands what he lacks that, like us, he uses and employs words belonging to sight, and applies them in a special way that is all his own. They brought to him a child whose godfather he was; having taken him in his arms, "Good God!" he cried; "what a fine child! What a pleasure to see him! What a bright face he has!" He will say, like any one of us: "This room has a fine view; it is fair weather; the sun shines bright." Yet more: because hunting, tennis, and shooting at a mark are our sports, and he has so heard, he likes them and occupies himself with them, and thinks that he plays the same part in them that we do; he is vexed by them and pleased by them, and yet knows them only through the ear. Some one calls out to him, when they are on some level ground where he can spur his horse, that there is a hare in sight; and again, they tell him that the hare is caught; and behold, he is as proud of his capture as he hears others say that they are. He takes a tennis-ball in his left hand and strikes it with his racket; he fires a harquebus at random, and is content with what his people tell him, that his aim was high or wide.

[1] *Si elle y est.*

How do we know that the human race does not commit a like absurdity for lack of a sense; and that, by this default, the greater part of the visage of things is concealed from us? How do we know whether the difficulties that we find in many works of nature are not due to that? and whether many acts of animals, which are beyond our capacity, are not the result of the power of some sense that we lack? and whether some among them have not, in this way, a fuller and more complete life than ours? We apprehend the apple by almost all our senses: we find in it redness, smoothness, odour, and sweetness; beyond these, it may have other qualities, as drying or astringent, as to which we have no related sense. The properties in many things that we call occult, — as that in the magnet of attracting iron, — is it not probable that there are in nature sentient faculties fit to discern and note these, and that the default of such faculties causes our ignorance of the true essence of such things? It is perhaps some special sense which manifests to cocks the hour of dawn and midnight, and moves them to crow; (*c*) which teaches hens, before any acquaintance and experience, to fear a sparrow-hawk, and not a goose or a peacock, which are larger creatures; [1] which warns chickens of the instinct of hostility to them that exists in the cat, and bids them not to distrust the dog: to be on their guard against the miauling of the one, — a rather soothing sort of sound, — and not against the bark of the other, a harsh and quarrelsome sound; which teaches wasps and ants and rats to choose always the best cheese and the best pear before tasting them; (*a*) and which leads the stag, (*c*) the elephant, and the snake (*a*) to the knowledge of a certain herb likely to cure them. There is no sense that may not have a wide sway, and that does not afford us by its means knowledge of an infinite number of things. If we were deficient in the apprehension of sounds, of harmony, and of the voice, that would cause unimaginable confusion in all the rest of our learning. For beyond what is attached to the special knowledge of each sense, how many proofs, consequences, and conclusions do we derive about other matters by comparing one sense with another! Let a man of understanding imagine

[1] See Seneca, *Epistle* 111.

the human race originally created without sight, and let him judge how much ignorance and confusion such a lack would bring upon it — what great darkness and blindness in our soul! It will be seen by this, of what importance to us in knowledge of the truth is the privation of another such sense, or of two, or of three, if such privation exists in us. We have pictured a truth by consultation with, and the concurrence of, our five senses; but perhaps the agreement and the contribution of eight or of ten senses was needed, to discern it with certainty and in its essence.

The sects[1] that combat man's learning combat it chiefly by the uncertainty and weakness of our senses; for, since all knowledge enters into us by their agency and means, if they err in the report they make to us; if they vitiate or change whatever they bring to us from without; if the light which, through them, flows into our soul is dim in the passage, we no longer have anything to cling to. From this extreme difficulty spring all these visionary ideas: that each thing has in itself all we find there; again, that it has naught of what we think that we find there; and the opinion of the Epicureans, that the sun is no larger than our vision judges it to be, —

(*b*) Quicquid id est, nihilo fertur majore figura
Quam nostris oculis quam cernimus, esse videtur;[2]

(*a*) that the manifestations which make a body appear large to him who is near it, and smaller to him who is at a distance from it, are both true, —

(*b*) Nec tamen hic oculis falli concedimus hilum
Proinde animi vitium hoc oculis adfingere noli;[3]

(*a*) and, determinedly, that there is no deception in the senses; that we must lie at their mercy, and seek elsewhere reasons to explain the difference and contradiction that we find in them; indeed, that a wholly different falsity and vain

[1] That is, the schools of philosophy.

[2] Whatever it is, the form it bears is not at all larger than, as our eyes discern it, it seems to us to be. — Lucretius, V, 577.

[3] Yet in all this we do not admit that the eyes are at all deceived. . . . Do not attribute to the eyes this error of the mind. — Idem, IV, 379, 386.

fancy must be devised (they go as far as that), rather than accuse the senses.

(*c*) Timagoras swore that, by pressing or turning his eye, he had never perceived the flame of the candle to become double, and that this seeming was due to the trickery of the imagination, not of the organ.[1] (*a*) Of all absurdities, the most absurd to the Epicureans is to deny the power and effect of the senses.

Proinde quod in quoque est his visum tempore, verum est.
Et, si non potuit ratio dissolvere causam,
Cur ea quæ fuerint juxtim quadrata, procul sint
Visa rotunda, tamen præstat rationis egentem
Reddere mendose causas utriusque figuræ,
Quam manibus manifesta suis emittere quoquam,
Et violare fidem primam, et convellere tota
Fundamenta quibus nixatur vita salusque.
Non modo enim ratio ruat omnis, vita quoque ipsa
Concidat extemplo, nisi credere sensibus ausis,
Præcipitesque locos vitare, et cætera quæ sint
In genere hoc fugienda.[2]

(*c*) This desperate and so unphilosophical advice means nothing else than that human learning can maintain itself only by unreasonable, foolish, and insane reasoning; but that still it is better that man, to make himself of worth, should avail himself of it and of every other assistance, however fantastic, than avow his inevitable ignorance — so disadvantageous a truth! He can not avoid the senses being the sovereign masters of his knowledge; but they are uncertain and liable to deception on all occasions. It is there that we must needs fight to the uttermost, and, if the lawful

[1] See Cicero, *Academica*, II, 25.

[2] Therefore, whatever is perceived by them at any time is true. And if the senses can not explain why objects, which near at hand seem square, appear at a distance round, it is better in this case to give a false reason for such appearance, than to let escape from your grasp manifest things, and to ruin the elements of belief, and to destroy all the foundations on which life and safety depend. For not only would reason altogether crumble: life itself would at once be overthrown, unless you choose to trust the senses, and to shun precipices and other things of this sort that are to be avoided. — Lucretius, IV, 499.

powers fail us, as they do, we must resort to obstinacy, rashness, effrontery.

(*b*) In the event that what the Epicureans say is true, namely, that we can learn nothing if what appears to the senses is false; and if what the Stoics say is also true, that what appears to the senses is so false that they can teach us nothing, we shall reach the conclusion, at the expense of those two great dogmatical sects, that we can learn nothing.[1] (*a*) As for the error and uncertainty in the operation of the senses, every one can furnish himself with as many examples as he may please, so common are the failures and deceptions which they put upon us. In the echo of a valley, the sound of a trumpet, which seems to come from in front of us, comes really from a mile or two behind us: —

(*b*) Extantesque procul medio de gurgite montes
Iidem apparent longe diversi licet.
Et fugere ad puppim colles campique videntur
Quos agimus propter navem . . .
. . . ubi in medio nobis equus acer obhæsit
Flumine, equi corpus transversum ferre videtur
Vis, et in adversum flumen contrudere raptim.[2]

(*a*) When holding a musket-ball under the second finger, with the middle finger lapped over the other, it is extremely difficult to admit that there is only one ball, the sense of touch gives such evidence of two. For, that the senses are many a time masters of the reason, and compel it to receive impressions which it knows and judges to be false, we see at every turn. I set apart the sense of touch, whose functions are more intimate, more vivid and material, which so often, by the effect of the pain that it brings to the body, subverts

[1] *Qu'il n'y a point de science.* See Cicero, *Academica*, II, 32.

[2] Mountains that rise from the sea seem to us but a single mass, although really far distant from each other. . . . And hills and fields by which we sail seem to move swiftly past the stern. . . . When a stubborn horse stops with us in the middle of a river, his transversely placed body [when we look down into the water] seems to us to be swiftly carried by some force against the current. — Lucretius, IV, 397, 389, 390, 420. — The lines are given as they appear in the *Édition Municipale*. There is a different arrangement in 1588, and a still different one (9 lines) in 1595.

all those fine Stoical resolutions, and forces to cry out with the belly-ache the man who has established in his mind, with the utmost resolution, this dogma, that the colic, like every other disease and pain, is a thing of no consequence, not having the power to abate any thing of the sovereign good hap and felicity wherein the wise man is housed by his virtue. There is no heart so effeminate that the sound of our drums and trumpets does not make it beat the faster; nor so insensible, that the sweetness of music does not excite and gladden it; and no soul so churlish that does not feel some touch of veneration when beholding the sombre vastness of our churches, the diversity of the decorations and order of our ceremonials, and when listening to the devotional strains of our organs, and the harmony, so solemn and devout, of our voices. Even those who enter them disdainfully feel a certain thrill at the heart, and a certain awe, which makes them distrustful of their state of mind.

(*b*) As for myself, I do not deem myself strong enough to hear, with senses undisturbed, verses of Horace and Catullus sung in a melodious voice by beautiful and youthful lips. (*c*) And Zeno was right in saying that the voice is the flower of beauty.[1] Some one tried to make me believe that a man whom all we Frenchmen know had deceived me in reciting to me verses that he had composed; that they were not the same on paper as in the air; and that my eyes would judge of them otherwise than my ears, so much power has utterance to give value and shape to works which lie at its mercy. Wherefore Philoxenus was not blameworthy when, hearing a man[2] give a bad accent to some composition of his, he trampled upon and broke some bricks belonging to him, saying: "I break what is yours, because you spoil what is mine."[3]

(*a*) For what reason did even the men who procured their own death, with a fixed determination turn away their faces, in order not to see the stroke that they caused to be dealt them? And they who, for their health, desire and order that they be cut and cauterised, why can not they endure the

[1] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Zeno*.
[2] A mason.
[3] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Arcesilaus*.

sight of the preparations, instruments, and work of the surgeon, since the sight can have no participation in the pain? Are not these fitting examples to prove the authority that the senses have over the reason? We are well aware that those tresses are borrowed from a page or a footman; that that rosy tint came from Spain, and that whiteness and smoothness from the ocean; still sight must needs compel us to think the person more lovable and more charming, against all reason. For in this there is nothing that is real.[1]

Auferimur cultu; gemmis auroque teguntur
Crimina: pars minima est ipsa puella sui.
Sæpe ubi sit quod ames inter tam multa requiras;
Decipit hac oculos Ægide dives amor.[2]

How much do the poets ascribe to the power of the senses, who make Narcissus desperately in love with his shadow?

Cunctaque miratur, quibus est mirabilis ipse;
Se cupit imprudens; et qui probat, ipse probatur;
Dumque petit, petitur; pariterque accendit et ardet;[3]

and Pygmalion's understanding, so perturbed by the impression of the sight of his ivory statue, that he loves it and adores it as if it had life!

Oscula dat reddique putat, sequiturque tenetque,
Et credit tactis digitos insidere membris;
Et metuit pressos veniat ne livor in artus.[4]

Place a philosopher in a cage of small, far-apart iron wires, and suspend it at the top of the towers of Notre Dame de Paris — he will see, by manifest reason, that it is

[1] That is, that really belongs to "the person."

[2] We are misled by ornament; defects are hidden by gems and gold; the girl is of herself the least part. Often you must needs seek where, amid all these things, is the beloved; with this covering wealthy love deceives our eyes. — Ovid, *Remedia Amoris*, I, 343.

[3] All is admired by him which in himself is admirable; ignorantly, he desires himself; and what he feels, he feels for himself; and according as he seeks, he is sought; and equally he himself burns and kindles flame. — Idem, *Metam.*, III, 424.

[4] He gives kisses and thinks them returned; he pursues her and clasps her, and imagines that her limbs yield to the pressure of his fingers; and he fears that his embrace may bruise her. — *Ibid.*, X, 256.

impossible for him to fall out of it, yet he will be unable (if he be not used to the tiler's trade) to prevent the sight of that vast height from terrifying and paralysing him. For it is difficult enough for us to feel safe in the galleries that are in our bell-towers if they are open,[1] even though they be of stone. There are those who can not even support the thought of them. Let a beam be placed between those two towers, of such width as we need in order to walk upon it — there is no philosophic wisdom so firm of will that it can give us courage to tread it as we should do if it were on the ground. I have often experienced this in our mountains hereabout (and yet I am one of those who are very little dismayed by such things), that I could not bear the sight of that bottomless depth without dread and a trembling in my hams and thighs, although I was not near the edge by quite my own length, and could not fall over if I did not knowingly place myself in danger. I have there noticed also that, whatever the height may be, provided in the slope there appears a tree or a jutting rock to catch the sight a little, and break it, it relieves us and gives us confidence, as if it were a thing from which we might receive help in the fall; but that we can not even look without dizziness upon the abrupt, smooth precipices, — (*c*) *ut despici sine vertigine simul oculorum animique non possit*,[2] — (*a*) which is a manifest imposture of the sight. That fine philosopher [3] put out his eyes in order to free his soul from the misleading [4] which it received from sight; and to be able to philosophise more at liberty. But by that reckoning he should also have stopped up his ears, (*b*) which Theophrastus says are the most dangerous organs that we have, as receiving violent impressions to disturb us and change us; [5] (*a*) and should have deprived himself, in fact, of all his other senses, that is to say, of his existence and his life. For they all have this power of con-

[1] *Façonnées à jour.*

[2] So that one can not look down them without a dizziness both of the eyes and of the mind. — Livy, XLIV, 6.

[3] Democritus. See Cicero, *De Fin.*, V, 29; Plutarch, *Of Curiosity*. In 1580 to 1588: *Ce fut pourquoy ce beau philosophe*, etc. Cf. Vol. I, pp. 80 and 322.

[4] *La desbauche.*

[5] See Plutarch, *Of Hearing.*

trolling our reason and our soul. (*c*) *Fit etiam sæpe specie quadam, sæpe vocum gravitate et cantibus, ut pellantur animi vehementius; sæpe etiam cura et timore.*[1] (*a*) Physicians hold that there are certain temperaments which are excited even to frenzy by some sounds and instruments. I have seen some who could not hear a bone gnawed under their table without losing patience; and there is scarcely any man who is not disturbed by that shrill, piercing noise that files make in rasping iron; just as, upon hearing chewing close by, or hearing some one talk who has an obstruction in the throat or the nose, many persons are moved to anger and hatred. That piping prompter[2] of Gracchus, who softened, steadied, and modulated his master's voice when he harangued at Rome[3] — what purpose did he serve, if the inflection and quality of tone had not power to stimulate and change the judgement of his hearers? Truly, there is much cause to brag of the firmness of this fine faculty, which lets itself be managed and swayed by the uncertain motion and chances of so slight a wind! This same cheating that the senses impose upon our understanding they receive in their turn. Our soul sometimes revenges itself in like manner: (*c*) they lie and are deceived in mutual emulation. (*a*) What we see and hear when moved by anger, we do not hear as it is;

Et solem geminum, et duplices se ostendere Thebas.[4]

The object that we love seems to us more beautiful than it really is, —

(*b*) Multimodis igitur pravas turpesque videmus
Esse in delitiis, summoque in honore vigere,[5] —

(*a*) and uglier, that which we detest. To a disquieted and afflicted man the light of day seems overcast and darksome.

[1] It often happens that our minds are very deeply impressed by some loud sound, or by song; and often also by anxiety and by fear. — Cicero, *De Divin.*, I, 37.

[2] *Ce fleuteur protocole.*

[3] Caius Gracchus. See Plutarch, *Life of Gracchus*, and *Of the cure of anger.*

[4] And two suns and two Thebes are seen. — Virgil, *Æneid*, IV, 470.

[5] So we often see women who are in many respects deformed and ugly warmly loved and held in the highest honour. — Lucretius, IV, 1155.

Our senses are not only changed, but often utterly stupefied, by the passions of the soul. How many things do we see that we do not perceive if our mind be otherwise occupied!

> In rebus quoque apertis noscere possis,
> Si non advertas animum, proinde esse, quasi omni
> Tempore semotæ fuerint, longeque remotæ.[1]

It seems that the soul withdraws into itself and arrests the powers of the senses. Thus, both inwardly and outwardly, man is full of weakness and falsehood.

(*b*) They who have likened our life to a dream were perchance more nearly right than they thought.[2] When we dream, our soul lives, acts, exercises all its faculties neither more nor less than when it is awake; but yet more inertly and vaguely, not by so much certainly that the difference is as that between night and sunlight — rather between night and twilight; in the one condition the soul sleeps, in the other, it dozes.[3] There are always obscurities, aye, Cimmerian obscurities. (*c*) We sleep when awake, and are awake when asleep. I do not see so clearly in sleep; but, as for my waking state, I never find it sufficiently perfect and unclouded. Also sleep, when profound, sometimes quiets dreams. But our waking is never so complete that it wholly casts out and scatters the musings which are the dreams of those who wake, and worse than dreams. Since our soul's reason accepts the imaginations and conceptions which are born in it while sleeping, and authorises the actions of our dreams with the same approval as those of the daytime, why do we not question whether our thinking, our acting, be not another form of dreaming, and our awaking some sort of sleeping? (*a*) If the senses be our chief judges, it is not ours alone that we must call into council; for in this faculty the animals have as much right as we, or more.[4] It is certain that in some of them hearing is more acute than in man, in others the sight, in others the smell, in others the touch or

[1] You must know that even things that are exposed to view, if the mind is not turned to them, are just as if they had always been far removed from you. — Lucretius, IV, 811.

[2] See Cicero, *Academica*, II, 17 and 19.

[3] *Là elle dort, icy elle sommeille, plus et moins.*

[4] See Sextus Empiricus, *Hypot.*, I, 14.

taste. Democritus said that in the gods and the beasts the faculties of sensation were much more perfect than in man.[1] Now between the action of their natures [2] and ours the difference is extreme. Our saliva cleanses and dries our wounds; it kills the serpent;

> Tantaque in his rebus distantia differitasque est,
> Ut quod alis cibus est, aliis fuat acre venenum.
> Sæpe etenim serpens, hominis contacta saliva,
> Disperit, ac sese mandendo conficit ipsa.[3]

What quality shall we ascribe to the saliva — that which affects us or that which affects the serpent? By which of the two natures shall we prove its true essential quality that we seek? Pliny says that in the East Indies there are fish of a certain kind,[4] which are poisonous to us and we to them, so that by our touch alone we kill them; [5] which is really poisonous, the man or the fish? What shall we believe about it — that man is poisonous to the fish, or the fish to man? (*b*) Some quality of the air affects man injuriously, which does not harm the ox; some other the ox, which does not harm man: which of the two qualities is, in reality and in nature, a pestilential one? (*a*) They who have the jaundice see all things yellower and paler than we: [6]

> (*b*) Lurida præterea fiunt quæcunque tuentur
> Arquati.[7]

(*a*) They who have the disease that the physicians call hyposphagma, which is a suffusion of blood under the skin, see all things red and blood-colour. These humours, which thus

[1] See Plutarch, *Of those sentiments*, etc. The same opinion of Democritus is quoted in Book I, chap. 54 (p. 16, *supra*).

[2] *Les effects de leur sens.*

[3] Such is the diversity that exists between things, that what is food to some is deadly poison to others. In fact, often a serpent, if touched by the spittle of a man, wastes away, and gnaws itself to death. — Lucretius, IV, 636.

[4] *Lievres marins* (*lepus marinus*).

[5] See Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, XXXII, 1.

[6] See Sextus Empiricus, *Hypot.*, I, 14, for this and the statements following the quotation.

[7] Whatever the jaundiced look at appears yellow. — Lucretius, IV, 332.

change the action of our sight, how do we know whether or not they predominate in the beasts and are usual with them? For we see some of them whose eyes are yellow like our sufferers from jaundice, others whose eyes are red as blood; it is probable that to these the colour of objects appears other than to us. Which of the two judgements is true? For it is not said that the essential character of things has relation to man alone. Hardness, whiteness, depth, and sharpness are of concern in the service and information of the animals as well as in ours; nature has given the use thereof to them as to us. When we partly close the eye, the body that we look at appears longer and more extended; many animals have the eye thus partly closed; this greater length is then, perchance, the true shape of that object, not that which our eyes give it in their usual condition. (*b*) If we press upon the lower part of the eye, things appear double to us; [1]

Bina lucernarum florentia lumina flammis,
Et duplices hominum facies, et corpora bina.[2]

(*a*) If our ears are in any way clogged, or the ear-passage narrowed, we receive sounds otherwise than we commonly do; those animals which have hairy ears, or which have only a very small hole in place of the ear, consequently do not hear what we hear, and receive a different sound.[3] At festivals and in theatres we see that, when a glass stained with some colour is placed in front of the glare of the torches, every thing in the place appears to us either green, yellow, or violet;

(*b*) Et vulgo faciunt id lutea russaque vela
Et furruginea, cum magnis intenta theatris,
Per malos volgata trabesque trementia pendent;
Namque ibi consessum caveaï subter, et omnem
Scenaï speciem, patrum, matrumque, deorum
Inficiunt, coguntque suo volitare colore;[4]

[1] See Lucretius, IV, 447–449.

[2] Lamps have a double light, blazing with flames, and men's faces and bodies are double. — Lucretius, IV, 450, 452.

[3] See Sextus Empiricus, *ubi supra*.

[4] And this is the effect that is commonly produced by the yellow and red and brown awnings stretched over great theatres, and hanging and

(*a*) it is probable that the eyes of the animals, which we see to be of divers colours, create for them the appearance of objects of the same colour as their eyes.

To judge of the actions of the senses, it would be necessary, therefore, that we should, in the first place, be in agreement with the beasts; secondly, among ourselves;[1] which we are not, in any wise; and whenever one man hears, sees, or tastes something different from another man, we enter into disputes; and we dispute principally about the diversity of the impressions which the senses make on us. By the ordinary law of nature a child hears and sees otherwise and tastes otherwise than a man of thirty years, and the latter otherwise than a sexagenarian. In some persons the senses are more dim and more obscure, and in others more open and more acute. Sick people attribute bitterness to sweet things; from which it is evident to us that we do not receive things as they are but [2] in one way and another, according as we are, and according to our perception.[3] Now, our perception being so uncertain and controverted, it is no longer to be wondered at if we are told that we can declare that the snow appears to us white;[4] but to assert that, essentially and in truth, it is so, this we could not warrant to ourselves; and this commencement being shaken, all the learning in the world necessarily goes down the stream. How if our senses themselves interfere with one another? A picture seems to the sight to be raised; to the touch it seems flat; shall we say that musk is or is not agreeable, which pleases our sense of smell and offends our sense of taste? There are herbs and unguents suited to one part of the body which injure another part; honey is pleasant to the taste, unpleasant to the sight.[5] Those rings which are cut in the

waving from pillars with beams. For they colour all the assembly below, and the whole spectacle, the stage, the senators and the matrons, and the statues of the gods dye them with their changing hues. — Lucretius, IV, 75.

[1] Imitated from Sextus Empiricus, *ubi supra.*

[2] This sentence — "Sick people . . . but" — was in the texts of 1580 to 1588, but was omitted in 1595.

[3] *Et qu'il nous semble.*

[4] See Sextus Empiricus, *Hypot.*, I, 13.

[5] See *Ibid.*, 14.

shape of feathers, and which in heraldry are called *pennes sans fin* — there is no eye that can detect their breadth or that can escape the deception that there is an increase of width on one side and a pointedness and diminishing on the other, even when one turns them round the finger; whereas, when handled, they seem to you of even width, and everywhere alike. (*b*) Ces personnes qui, pour aider leur volupté, se servoient anciennement de miroirs propres à grossir et agrandir l'object qu'ils representent, affin que les membres qu'ils avoient à embesoigner, leur pleussent d'avantage par cette accroissance oculaire; auquel des deux sens donnoient-ils gaigne, ou à la veue qui leur representoit ces membres gros et grands à souhait, où a l'attouchement qui les leur presentoit petits et desdaignables?[1]

(*a*) Is it our senses which impart to the subject these varying conditions, and has it really but one? As we see with the bread that we eat: it is mere bread, but our using it makes of it bones, blood, flesh, hair, and nails;

(*b*) Ut cibus, in membra atque artus cum diditur omnes,
Disperit, atque aliam naturam sufficit ex se.[2]

(*a*) The moisture which the root of a tree sucks up becomes trunk, leaves, and fruit; and the air, although it be but itself, becomes, by being blown through a trumpet, diversified in a thousand sorts of sounds[3] — our senses, let me ask, do they create in the same way diverse qualities in these things, or do the things have such in themselves?[4] And, with this doubt, what can we decide as to their true essential character? Moreover, since the conditions of sickness, of waking dreams, or of sleep, make things appear to us other than they appear to the healthy, the wise, and the waking, is it not probable that our best state and our natural moods have also wherewith to give a being to things related to our condition, and to adjust them to itself, as our disordered moods do? And that our health is as capable as our sickness of im-

[1] See Seneca, *Natural Questions*, I, 16.2.

[2] Just as food that has entered our bodies and limbs is destroyed and furnishes out of itself a different substance. — Lucretius, III, 703.

[3] See Sextus Empiricus, *ubi supra.*

[4] *Sont-ce, dis-je, nos sens qui façonnent de mesme de diverses qualitez ces subjects, ou s'ils les sont telles?*

parting a certain aspect to them? (*c*) Why has not the temperate man some appearance of things peculiar to himself,[1] as the intemperate man has? and will he not equally impress his character upon them?[2] The satiated man attributes to the wine its insipidity; the well-governed man, its flavour; the thirsty man, its refreshingness.

(*a*) Now, since our condition arranges all things for itself and transforms them according to itself, we no longer know what any thing is in reality; for nothing comes to us other than falsified and changed by our senses. When the compass, the square, and the rule are untrue, all the proportions which are derived from them, all the buildings which are erected according to their measure, are also necessarily defective and lacking. The uncertainty of our senses renders uncertain all that they give birth to.

> Denique ut in fabrica, si prava est regula prima,
> Normaque si fallax rectis regionibus exit,
> Et libella aliqua si ex parte claudicat hilum,
> Omnia mendose fieri atque obstipa necessum est,
> Prava, cubantia, prona, supina, atque absona tecta,
> Jam ruere ut quædam videantur velle, ruantque
> Prodita judiciis fallacibus omnia primis.
> Hic igitur ratio tibi rerum prava necesse est
> Falsaque sit, falsis quæcumque a sensibus orta est.[3]

For the rest, who can be competent to pass judgement upon these differences? As we say in religious discussions that we must have a judge who is not connected with either one or the other party, who is exempt from preference or partiality, which is impossible among Christians, the same is the case here: for, if he be old, he can not judge of the feel-

[1] *Quelque forme des objects relative à soi.*

[2] See Sextus Empiricus, *ubi supra.*

[3] As in a building, if from the first the plan is false, and if the square is not true, and the levels are in any part uneven, the whole building is of necessity askew and awry, crooked, bowed, leaning forward, leaning backward, with an ill-fitted roof, and every part seems ready to collapse, and the whole building, betrayed by fallacious decisions, does collapse, so, likewise, your reasoning about things is of necessity defective and false, since it is based on the false evidence of the senses. — Lucretius, IV, 513.

ings of old age, being himself a party in that discussion; if he is young, the same; healthy, the same; the same sick, sleeping, and waking. We should need some one exempt from all these qualities, in order that, without preoccupation of judgement, he might judge these propositions as if they were indifferent to him; by that reckoning we should need a judge such as never was.[1] To judge of the manifestations that we receive from things, we should need a judicatory organ; to confirm that organ we must have demonstration; to confirm the demonstration, an organ; thus we are turning in a circle. Since the senses can not put an end to our dispute, being themselves full of uncertainty, it must be reasoning that does so; no reasoning can be established except by other reasoning; thus we are endlessly driven back and back.[2] Our mental conception is not directly connected with outside things,[3] for it is conceived through the medium of the senses, and the senses do not grasp the outside thing,[4] but only their own impressions; and thus the mental conception is not of the thing itself, but only of the impression on the senses, which impression is some thing other than the thing; wherefore, he who judges by what is manifest to the senses judges by some thing other than the thing itself. And as for saying that the impressions on the senses represent to the soul the nature of outside things by resemblance, how can the understanding be assured of that resemblance, having of itself no commerce with outside things? Just as one who does not know Socrates, seeing his portrait, can not say that it resembles him. Now he who should attempt, none the less, to judge by what is manifest to the senses, if by all such manifestations it is impossible, for they interfere with one another by their extreme differences and discrepancies, as we see by experience, — shall some selected manifestations govern the rest? It will be necessary to confirm the one selected by another selected one, the second by a third, and so it will all never be done.[5]

[1] See Sextus Empiricus, *ubi supra.*
[2] *Nous voyla à reculons jusques à l'infiny.*
[3] *Nostre fantasie ne s'applique pas aux choses estrangeres.*
[4] *Le subject.*
[5] All this is taken from Sextus Empiricus, *Hypot.*, II, 7.

Finally, there is no constant existence, either of our own being, or of that of what we observe.[1] Both we and our judgement and all mortal things are incessantly flowing and rolling on. Thus nothing certain can be decided of one or the other, both what is judging and what is judged being in a state of continual change and movement.[2]

We have no intercourse with being, because all human nature is always half-way between birth and death, giving of itself only an obscure manifestation and shadow, and an uncertain and feeble surmise. And if, peradventure, you fix your mind on seeking to seize its being, it will be neither more nor less than one attempting to grasp water; for the more he shall squeeze and compress that which naturally flows in all directions, so much the more he will lose what he tries to grasp and hold. And so, all things being subject to pass from one change to another, the reason, seeking in them a real subsistence, finds itself disappointed, being unable to lay hold of any thing subsistent and permanent, because every thing is coming into being and does not as yet wholly exist, or is beginning to die before it is born. Plato said[3] that bodies never had existence, but, indeed, birth; (*c*) believing that Homer made Oceanus the father of the gods and Thetis their mother, to show us that all things are in a state of perpetual flux, change, and variation; an opinion common, as he says, to all philosophers before his time, save only Parmenides, who denied that things have motion, the power of which he considers to be of great importance; (*a*) Pythagoras, that all matter is fluid and unstable;[4] the Stoics, that there is no present time, and that what we call the present is only the junction and blending of the future and the past;[5] Heraclitus, that no man ever entered twice into the same stream; (*b*) Epicharmus, that he who in times past borrowed money does not owe it now, and that he who was invited last night to come this morning to dine comes

[1] *Ny de celuy des objects.*

[2] This and the following pages are taken almost word for word from Plutarch, *Of the meaning of the word Ei.*

[3] In the *Theætetus.*

[4] Sextus Empicirus (*Hypot.*, I, 32) ascribes this belief to Protagoras.

[5] See Plutarch, *Common conceptions against the Stoics.*

to-day uninvited, because they [1] are no longer themselves; they have become others; [2] (*a*) and that it would be impossible to find a mortal substance twice in the same state; for through suddenness and facility of change, sometimes it scatters, sometimes it reassembles; it comes, and then it goes. So that that which begins to be born never attains a perfect existence, because this being born never ends and never stops, as being finished, but from the seed is forever changing and shifting from one state to another. As from the human seed is formed first in the mother's womb a formless fruit, then a formed child, then, having come forth from the womb, a child at the breast; later, it becomes a boy; then, in due course, a stripling; afterwards, an adult man; then a middle-aged man; and, finally, a decrepit old man. So that the following age and generation constantly destroys and ruins the preceding one.

(*b*) Mutat enim mundi naturam totius ætas,
Ex alioque alius status excipere omnia debet.
Nec manet ulla sui similis res; omnia migrant,
Omnia commutat natura et vertere cogit.[3]

(*a*) And yet we foolishly dread one kind of death, when we have already passed, and are passing through so many others. For not only, as Heraclitus said, is the death of fire the generation of air, and the death of air the generation of water, but even more manifestly can we see it in ourselves. The flower of middle age dies and passes when old age arrives, and youth ends in the flower of an adult man, childhood in youth, and the first existence in infancy; and yesterday dies in to-day, and to-day will die in to-morrow; and there is nothing which endures and which is always the same. For, if it were not so, if we remain always one and the

[1] The persons. See Plutarch, *Why divine justice sometimes postpones the punishment of evil-doers*.

[2] The transcription from Amyot's translation of Plutarch's treatise *Of the meaning of the word Ei* continues hence almost to the end (with many omissions), except the quotation from Lucretius.

[3] Time, in fact, changes the nature of the whole world, and in every thing one condition is followed by another. Nothing remains the same; all things move, and are transformed by the power of nature. — Lucretius, V, 826.

same, how is it that we take pleasure now in one thing and now in another? How is it that we love things that are contrary to one another, or hate them; that we praise them or blame them? How do we have different emotions, not retaining the same feeling about the same thought? For it is not probable that, without change, we should take other impressions; and that which suffers change does not remain one same thing; and if it be not one same thing, then also it is non-existent. Rather, when one thing thus simply changes its being, it also always becomes different from itself. And consequently the natural senses are deceived and deluded, taking that which is manifest to be that which exists, for lack of well knowing what is that which exists.

But what is, then, that which really exists? That which is eternal, that is to say, which has never had a beginning and will never have an end; to which time brings no change. For time is a thing in motion, which manifests itself obscurely, of a nature always flowing and fluctuating, never remaining stable or permanent; to which these words pertain: "before and after," and "has been," or "will be," which at first sight clearly show that it is not a thing which has existence; for it would be great folly and very manifest error to say that that exists which is not yet in existence, or which has already ceased to exist. And as for these words, "present," "instant," "now," by which it seems that we principally maintain and establish our understanding of time, the reason, laying bare their significance, destroys it instantly; for it [1] forthwith splits time asunder and divides it into future and past, as choosing to see it cut by necessity into two parts. The same thing happens to nature, which is measured by time, as to time, which measures it. For, likewise, there is not in nature any thing which endures, any thing which is subsistent; but all things are either born, or being born, or dying. Wherefore, it would be sinful to say of God, who alone exists, that he has been, or that he will be. For those terms denote deteriorations, phases, or vicissitudes of some thing which can neither last nor remain in existence. From this it must be concluded that God alone exists, not according to any measure of time, but according to an un-

[1] That is, the reason.

changeable and immovable eternity, not measured by time or subject to any deterioration; before which existence nothing was, nor will any thing be afterward, either more precedent or more recent, but an existence actually existing,[1] who with a single now fills the forever; and there is nothing that really exists save him alone; nor can it be said, "He has been," or "He will be"; without beginning and without end.[2]

To this so religious conclusion of a pagan, I desire to add only this saying of a witness of the same condition, as the close of this long and wearisome discussion, which would furnish me with endless matter. "Oh, what a despicable and abject thing is man," he says, "if he does not lift himself above human nature!"[3] (*c*) This is a wise saying and a profitable desire, but none the less absurd. For (*a*) to make a handful bigger than the hand, an armful bigger than the arm, and to hope to take a stride longer than the stretch of our legs, this is impossible and unnatural. Neither can man raise himself above himself and human nature; for he can see only with his eyes, and grasp only with his hands.[4] He will be lifted up if God by special favour lends him his hand; he will be lifted up, when abandoning and renouncing his own means and letting himself be uplifted and upheld (*c*) by purely heavenly means.[5] It is for our Christian faith, not for the Stoic virtue, to aspire to that divine and miraculous metamorphosis.

[1] *Ny plus nouveau ou plus recent, ains un realement estant.*

[2] The passage of Plutarch ends here.

[3] See Seneca, *Natural Questions*, Preface to book I. In 1580 to 1588: *Il n'est mot en toute sa secte Stoique plus veritable, que celuy-là.*

[4] *Ny saisir que de ses prises.*

[5] In 1580 to 1588: *Par la grace divine, mais non autrement.*

END OF VOLUME TWO

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